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O R E L L A N A

AND

OTHER POEMS



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# O R E L L A N A

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

J. LOGIE ROBERTSON, M.A.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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## APOLOGY FOR POESY.

*FROM what far regions of the Infinite  
Beyond the solar glow  
I have been sent from uncreated light,  
And why to this dim borderland of Night,  
My Lord, I do not know.*

*But Thou art wise ; and in my mortal sphere,  
Pent in this prison tower,  
Blown to me from my spirit-home I hear,  
Sounding, now faint and far, now near and  
clear,  
Harmonies every hour.*

*The sun goes surging up the East in song ;  
The moon in muffled strain  
Repeats the pæan, whispering it among  
The choral stars, that listen and prolong,  
And cease and sing again.*

*Ocean all through his many-chambered seas,  
The seas through all their bays,  
Rivers and rills, forests with all their trees,  
Tempest, and thunder, and the wandering breeze,  
My God, proclaim Thy praise.*

*—And oft when midnight buries vale and hill,  
Loosening its music free,  
My heart instinctive sings, as sea-shells will,  
Though inland carried far, faithfully still  
Echo their parent sea.*

*These are of Thee—these broken harmonies,  
That wander from Thy lyre  
Like wind-blown blossoms of the Hesperides,  
Or spray sun-kissed to golden irises  
And twists of coloured fire.*

*I hear and thrill;—not as the soulless cliff  
Deaf to the vocal sea,  
But answering to the joy like dancing skiff:  
—God of all Harmony! forgive me if  
I dare to answer Thee!*

•

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ORELLANA

A POEM





## BOOK I.

---

PERU was fallen, and her king was dead ;  
And from its tower, plucked down with ruthless hand,

The golden image of the worshipped Sun  
No longer blazed o'er Cuzco. Far and wide  
The land was harried of its garnered wealth,  
Stripped of its ornaments of dowered gold,  
Its silver from the rock's reluctant grip  
Wrung with relentless hand ; and what remained

Was the slow promise of the laboured fields.  
But not to them, these fiery youth of Spain,  
The shepherd's even pulse, or the long hopes  
That wait on tillage and the swelling seed

And fostering heat and rain : their veins were  
filled

With lust of conquest, and the gleam of gold  
Was ever in each eye. Yet still they thronged  
The narrow belt between the aerial hills  
And the wide mystery of the Western seas ;  
And, finding nothing left of native growth  
To fuel their ambitious wants, they turned  
With envious glances on each other's gain.  
Till the great Marquis, sitting at Quito,  
And ruling with an ill-acknowledged sway  
Subjects that hoped each one himself to rule,  
Spoke to Gonzalo :

“ Other realms there are  
Beyond these giant hills or o'er those waves,  
Haply in continent, at least in isle,  
The bearer of whose destiny be thou  
And these—take whom thou wilt—that cannot  
rest

Until it be delivered. Oh, my brother !  
There comes not once again in after-time  
To thee or any man such glorious hope

As beckons now : 'tis the last mystery  
Of the round globe hid in yon ocean waste,  
Or from yon snowy heights to be descried.  
Rise equal to thy fortune. Be it thine  
To finish what Columbus but began,  
And make the name, our common name,  
Pizarro,  
Wide as the water, lasting as the land !  
See what a sacrifice of fame I make !  
But thou or I, what matter? We are one ;  
And while I strengthen yet my foothold here  
The freer thine for conquest."

While he spake,  
Down the steep flanks of the Sierra crept  
The tell-tale breezes, bearing in their wings  
Odours of cinnamon, and whispering low  
Of wealth unguarded in the vales beyond.  
The Spanish soldier, keeping nightly watch  
Before the general's tent with idle pace,  
Paused, and with upturned face inquiringly  
Sniffed the cool odorous air : sweeter to him  
Its soft caresses on his swarthy cheek

Than memories of Xenil, or the gush  
Of Ebro's waters clear : nor kindlier less  
Its freshness folding round his sunburnt neck  
Than virgin's arm of snow. While thus he  
stood,

Gonzalo, issuing from the tent, remarked  
His absent gaze upon the snowy ridge  
Which cut into the sky, shearing the stars,  
Past the low-floating moon. Familiarly  
Upon his shoulder with broad hand he smote,  
And to his look high thought attributing—  
“What say'st thou, comrade? Will it yield to  
Spain?

Or is it sacred to the stars alone,  
A higher Alp than Hannibal would dare?  
Perchance there is a Hannibal at hand !  
Only be ready thou, my valiant soldier,  
Whom I elect my standard-bearer here  
—What is thy name?”

Abrupt he stayed ; and he,  
That other,—“Hernan Sanchez am I called.”  
“I know thee well : attend my trumpet-call

To-morrow morning ; I have need of thee "—  
And passed to his own tent, leaving the youth  
With the warm blush of pride upon his face,  
And a vague sense of praise.

At earliest dawn  
Gonzalo's trumpet shrilling through the tents  
Awoke the warrior conquering in his dreams.  
Three hundred youths sprang joyful to the  
call.

These overnight, ere e'er he had retired,  
And with his great idea burning clear  
In its unclouded dawn, Gonzalo drew,  
As flame draws flame, partakers of a faith  
To light on hidden empire, win for Spain  
Another Mexico, a new Peru !  
Each brought a heart strengthened by hardy  
use,  
And never yet contaminate with fear ;  
A sword, and each could wield it ; and a band  
Of dusky faces waiting on his nod,  
And catching from his frown the fearlessness  
Born of excessive or habitual fear.

With arms caught up in haste, and warlike  
stores,

And other needs resigned to Indian slaves  
Enlackeyed with the baggage, forth at dawn,  
With little words of parting,—forth they rode  
While yet the ensanguined sun, like some vast  
bird

With flaming wings in a wide equipoise,  
Stooped on the mountains ere he soared aloft  
For a strong flight prepared : not otherwise  
The soul of each, with vigorous thoughts elate,  
Spurning the summits of attained hope,  
Looked to a loftier goal.

Next day at noon

Their ranks were startled with a voice behind  
As of a messenger who gallops hard,  
Ere yet too late, with some neglected trust.  
All turned ; and lo ! impelled by destiny,  
Breathless he comes, the inimitable thief  
Who stole the glory of the Amazon,  
And wrote across a continent his name  
As if on parchment with a running pen,—

Who, like a meteor flashing down the night,  
That bursts full-blazed, and, blazing, is blown  
    out,  
That upsprings unannounced of tremulous  
    dawn,  
And sinks without a setting,—shot athwart  
The width of the New World, and disappeared  
Leaving the long lapse of the ocean stream  
To syllable his name to all its shores  
With repetitive murmur, Orellana !

On the fifth day

The sudden swoop of night descending prone  
Surprised them in a hollow where the land  
Sinks ere it reascends with daring slope  
To end with snowy purity in Heaven.  
Here, weary with their march of days, the task,  
Though self-imposed, in all its magnitude  
First seemed to tower with sudden increment  
Beyond the flight of Hope. For, as they lay  
Supine beside their camp-fires, and the moon,  
Looking sheer down upon them from the ridge  
With unexpected light, revealed the steeps

Which rose to where she seemed to sit enthroned,

And the vast bulk as of a natural wall

Which God with His own hands had built, the thought

Of their own littleness, as there they lay,

A handful hid in a forgotten valley,

While the great mountain towered and the broad sky

Spread placid and serene, and the vague fear

Of a presumptuous sin in such high presence

O'ercame them, wearied, and they would have fled,

But that they were ashamed even to speak

The coward thoughts which each man deemed his own.

But with the morn courage returned ; and Hope

That, revelling in the Elysian fields beyond,

Forgetful of her office by the way,

Had winged by night her backward flight unseen,

Now settling on the summits overhead,



Shone with severer ray, commandingly  
To the stern joys of danger ill to dare  
And labour yielding slow. Under its light  
(For hope too distant but fatigues the mind)  
They braced them for the first encountered  
toil,

And were in wonder, past the point of shame,  
Whence the distrust and awe of yesternight,—  
Distrust of mind, the strongest power on earth,  
And awe of senseless matter, dull and dead,  
And would have laughed aloud in the clear air  
Of early morning as they scaled the side  
Of the huge innocent mountain, but the dread  
Of a recurrence of the perilous spell  
Moved them to sober thought and kept them  
mute.

Three days the ascent continued—three long  
days—

And on the fourth they came upon the snow ;  
And still the mountain towered till lost to view  
In a dense whirl of cloud. Ah ! then for thee,  
Poor Indian slave, struggling beneath thy load,

With back low bent and shivering limbs thin  
clad,

On the bleak wintry heights, what woes in store  
When wild and wide, with whirling wind and  
snow,

And crash of loosened rocks the storm came  
down,

And, clutching at thy heart with fingers cold,  
Blew the sharp ice of death into thine eyes,  
That never more should brighten at the glow  
Of summer beauty in thy native plains !

Unseen the mute imploring look, unrecked

If seen, with which the sinking Indian turned  
His human eyes, dim with the glaze of death,

Upon his resolute lord, the Spaniard drew  
His mantle closer round him, set his teeth,

And without word toiled steadily up the steep,  
Nor turned to right or left, nor paused, nor  
spoke

Even when his comrade, swaying to the blast,  
Went headlong o'er the rocks, or disappeared  
Where, walking fearless to his doom, he stepped

Upon a bridge of snow. For he would storm  
The stronghold of the storm, and plant his foot  
And flag victorious in the chiefest seat  
And citadel of the tempest !

Yet at last

When they had reached the summit the wind  
dropped,

And the mist reeled and fled : the sun poured  
in,

And shivering on the naked top, they saw  
Through the immaculate air the curving globe  
Bend to the far horizon's utmost verge  
From west to east unknown, a roomy width !  
But not beyond the grasp of human will  
To limit and explore : the mystery,  
The impenetrable mystery was gone  
Of magnitude : the big earth seemed to shrink  
To conquerable compass ; and the fear  
That there was nothing further now to find,  
Nor continent to conquer after this,  
High-hovering o'er their minds, would have  
descended

To circumscribe their hope, but that the view  
That eastward stretched beneath them filled  
their eyes,

And shut out from their hearts the after-pain,  
Which yet, with furious mind swift to exhaust

Immediate expectation, some even then  
In lust of conquest were anticipating !

It was a scene of Earth the grandest : far  
As eye could pierce undimmed with utmost strain

The landscape spread in virgin loveliness  
As if new-made, without the trace of man,  
And waiting in the hush of afternoon  
Expectant of possessors, a new race  
Of sinless being, to admire its beauty  
And live the life of happy worshippers  
Amid its groves, and gratefully content.

Far other they that with fierce eyes looked  
down  
From the high natural wall that guarded in  
This later paradise : the wolfish joy

That snatches to destroy lay in their heart  
Slumbering, while wonder gazed on tiptoe mute  
Where wide savannahs rolled like a green sea  
Of verdure decked with flowers, and forests  
    waved

Their wealth of branches on the lower hills,  
And in the lonely valleys brightly clear  
Wound with a noble freedom lordly streams,  
With here a wide expanse of silvery lake  
Green-islanded with palm of stately droop,  
And there the sheeny bend repeated oft  
Of some more distant river sliding slow  
To far-off waters. They forgot their toils,  
Forgot that they had ever lived till now.  
The past broke from them wholly, like a mantle  
It slipped from them with all its care and  
    grief,  
Remembrance of inhospitable shores,  
Hardship on hill and billow, sickness, want,  
Thirst, the broad ocean, memories of home,  
Country, and kin, and love's and friendship's  
    claims.

They seemed new-wakened ; and, the present  
pain

Of pinching cold unfelt, their souls leapt down  
To taste existence in the under valleys.

On the sharp rocks meanwhile the Indians  
lay

Breathless with pallid lips moaning in pain  
Their secret miseries to Mother Earth  
That would not take them to the long embrace  
Of her pain-lulling arms, but let them cling  
Heedless of their complaints, the while she  
flung

Her favours at the feet of aliens.

Or if, though few, in shivering groups upheld  
By force of sympathy, not native might,  
Incuriously like timid sheep they turned  
Their dumb pathetic eyes from the new scenes  
That met their adverse gaze, arrived the top,  
Backwards to whence they came : it was their  
home,

And this perchance the latest farewell look  
Of happiness and hope !

Night caught them thus ;  
These on the new-found land gazing with hope,  
And those with mind or eye despondingly  
Upon the old. And now along the ridge  
Glimmered the little camp-fires, scantily fed  
With sapless twigs in handfuls, wintry moss,  
And baggage-boxes, what they best could spare.  
To sleep was death : the Spaniard in his cloak  
Stalked out the weary hours from fire to fire  
Under the chilling shadow of the dark,  
Shadow of death to many ! where they sat  
Frozen to statues, stretching pulseless arms  
To flames that but revealed the stony glare  
Of eyes untenanted, and gave no heat ;  
Or ghastlier still when the cold beam of morn  
Played on the features of the seated dead  
Circling a heap of ashes !

Down the long slope  
At break of day the straggling march began,  
And ere the last, an Indian with his load,  
Had left the night's encampment to the dead,  
The hovering condor dropped upon its prey.

Snow fell in mantling flakes, but soon they  
dipped

Into a warmer air : the grass grew green,  
And plants, just budding in the sheltered cleft,  
And clumps of trees in social brotherhood,  
And note of startled bird, and flash of plumes  
Awoke unwonted pleasure in their minds  
To see and hear at hand : in one day's march  
They stepped from January into June.  
And still 'twas January, the drear time  
When universal death to other lands  
Makes periodic visit to assert  
Usurped dominion o'er the realms of life  
Designed of old for governance of man,  
An ill-kept birthright : but in this fair land,  
A new-made world then first surveyed by eyes  
Tired with the faded glories of the old,  
Perpetual Spring and Summer hand in hand,  
Inseparable sisters, make their home  
Eternal in the valleys : wintry storms  
Menace but come not, nor the bounteous year  
Ends in a harvestry of withered leaves,



But leaf to leaf without a pause succeeds  
Shooting off death, and bud to blossom grows,  
And on the bough, whence falls the fruit mature,  
Straight peering through the tender bark you  
see

The hastening buds gemming the immortal tree.  
Arrived the lower slopes they pitched their  
camp

Under a lofty shade of forest boughs,  
And wasted a long afternoon in doubt  
Which way to turn, so wide the region lay,  
In its immensity fit to maintain  
The growth of ancient monarchies that might  
In solitude be sitting far apart  
And coexist, perchance in mutual peace  
As being each to other quite unknown.  
Ere early nightfall—for the western hills,  
A high horizon, met the sinking sun  
Before its full decline—their scouts returned  
And made report of natural gardens fair,  
And bird and beast that followed wildly tame  
But fled them when approached, as half in fear

And half in wonder of the human form,  
But nowhere trace of man or other race  
Corporeal that betokened by their look  
Or handiwork the godlike power of mind.  
The gibbering of the ape rang through the  
    woods  
And from the rocks and o'er the rushing  
    streams ;  
And on the lonely level river-shores  
Where cities should have sat, or temple towered  
On flowery hill, primeval quiet reigned :  
The land was tenantless.  
    So on they rode with listless bridles ringing  
Idly, and silence fell upon their march.  
Through the clear air from boughs o'erarching  
    high  
In sunny radiance fragile blossoms fair,  
The peaceful tribute of the unowned woods,  
Descended lightly on their warlike arms,  
As down the glade or by the forest's marge  
In a strange pomp the short procession wound.  
They moved as in a dream : the industrious bee

Hummed heedless by on its own task intent  
As if they were not ; on the distant glade  
The indifferent herd was feeding as they  
passed ;

The bird pursued its mate from tree to tree,  
Forgetful of their presence ; they were shunned  
Or tolerated only in a land  
Sacred to peaceful thoughts and beauteous  
forms :

The genius of the place viewed them askance,  
Withholding all communion : they were awed  
By the lone wealth and beauty of the land,  
And felt like men of too presumptuous mind  
Trespassing on the gardens of a god.

They longed for difficulties, dangers, foes,  
Which yet they dreaded being yet unseen,  
Yet everywhere suspected : and as oft  
As to some flowery eminence they came  
That rose unforested, a specular mount,  
Commanding all the varied region round,  
It was the sudden movement in the brake  
Of panther half-revealed, or to the shore

The alligator shooting from the stream,  
That sent the languor from their sated eyes,  
O'erwearied with the spectral loveliness  
And dulled by the excess of beauty,—if per-  
chance

The distant figure might betoken man,  
Savage or civilised, urging the chase  
Afoot, or in canoe threading the maze  
Of intertangling waters that unite  
Haply some hidden settlement or hut  
With the big bustle of a central town.

Strange choice of men, if choice it may be  
called,

Perverse that inappreciative turns  
Or with suspicious eye from the green nooks  
Of Eden that still gem the desolate earth  
To fix on barren sands and snowy wastes  
And rocks amid the sea : strange choice is  
theirs

Self-exiled in the wild to force by art,  
And hardly force after long strife and pain,  
A pittance from inhospitable shores

Among unlovely scenes, while nature wastes  
Her richest and her fairest on the brute.  
As lovely is the land, and still, alas !  
As lonely to this day, as when they passed,  
These mailèd strangers, like a threatening wing  
That hurries through the sunshine of a dream.  
Yet still the Briton to his barren rocks  
Clings with convulsive hand ! It seems as if,  
Since the great nameless terror of the Flame  
That round the umbrageous gates of Eden  
          swung  
Relentless to the expatriated pair,  
The memory of the fear, an instinct grown  
Transmitted with the blood, still drives the sons  
Of Adam to the Desert, and despoils  
With strange suspicions loveliness itself  
Of more than half its natural yield of joy.  
So through those beauteous realms, that seemed  
          to them  
The hallowed gardens of an absent god,  
With fearful hearts they hastened. And ere long  
Strange fitful airs of most divine perfume,

That come and go like wandered harmonies  
Loosed from an angel's lyre, salute their sense  
Inhaling Paradise ;—the heralds these  
Of a new marvel from the hidden East.  
And lo ! at last she comes, the fair Wind-  
    queen,  
Riding the billowy air most gracefully !  
The tall tree-tops in meek obeisance bow,  
The lower forest claps its hands of leaves,  
And the dim air is lightened with the flush  
And glow of scattered blossoms, pink and pale,  
Before her coming ! She is come, is gone !  
And the sweet thought of cedarn palaces  
And bowers of cinnamon in far retreats  
Amid the woodland gloom fills all the mind,  
Dropped from her trailing garments as she  
    passed,  
Till growing faint and faint the charm dies out,  
And to the hungering Spaniard leaves again  
The common airs of earth, and memories  
Eternal, though of momentary birth.  
Now with the heavenly balm intoxicate

They turn their quest to whence the incense  
came,

If haply they may find the odorous shades

Of El Dorado : sudden hope is theirs

Expectant of fruition every hour,

But every hour the hope is lengthened out,

And fond exertion slackens ; droopingly

They journey on as in a labyrinth

Whose every winding leads them towards an  
end,

Or leaves them more astray : forward they  
move,

Yet more like wearied soldiers to their camp

Listless returning after a defeat.

The vacant air transmits no messages,

Or, from perplexing quarters faintly blown,

The musky-pinioned couriers of the sky,

Viewless and vagrant, only mock their toil ;

For everywhere the land is as before,

Beauteous but barren of immediate gain ;

And the long calm eventless monotone

Of day succeeds to day with all the hues

That at the first flashed in their joyous eyes  
Now faded, blanched, and colourless as glass  
On which the shivered lance of level light,  
Full aimed, no longer falls.

“A soldier I,”

At length impatiently the leader spoke :  
’Twas midnight, and the restless Spaniards sat  
Like statues, speaking none, beneath the shade  
Of the mysterious wood, while overhead  
Pulsed the large constellations in the heat  
Of the high air most tranquilly : “A soldier I ;  
And this strange peace and utter loneliness,  
They madden me : nor man nor town is here,  
Nor laurels worthy of a warrior’s brow ;  
And if the promised groves of cinnamon  
Be here, we know not—the winds only know !  
Nay ! I will back—there’s honour in Peru !”

None moved nor answered, when a distant  
voice

That seemed aerial from the listening wild  
Rose syllabled above the forest hum  
Articulated humanly, and thrice



In a strange tongue but sweetly kind to hear.  
It startled all—save one, whom destiny  
With most secure indifference lapped in sleep,  
The unconscious owner of the Amazon,  
Biding his time. And first the Father spoke,  
Whose spirit, fired with Christian chivalry,  
Yearned for adventure in the pagan mind  
(And hither on that errand had he come):  
“It is the voice of God, spoken by bird  
I know not, but believe the omen true.  
Inviting was the sound—nay! let us on!  
Speak not of going back: trifles like this,  
If it were but the cry of startled bird,  
Are trifles only to the heedless ear;  
To those that note them they are proved the  
call  
Of Heaven to noble deeds: nay! let us on!  
It needs must be that somewhere in these wilds  
A remnant of the sundered race of man  
In pagan isolation dwells apart  
From the great brotherhood, with whom 'tis  
ours

To link them in fraternal bonds of love ;  
For not alone to us did God's dear Son  
Leave the rich legacy of promised Heaven ;  
And they, the co-heirs with us of His grace,  
Wait the announcement privileged to us,  
Yea, and enjoined the ambassadors of God  
Of His most blessèd embassy to them.  
Lofty our mission and our warfare high,  
Above the mean ambitions of the flesh,  
With demons and the darkened mind : and if,  
Pray Heaven it be ! a bloodless victory  
Won by the spiritual arm, let the spear rust,  
Let Spain be silent of our soundless deeds :  
We are the vassals of a higher lord  
Of more imperial sway than Charles of Spain !”  
They gave assent, cloaking their secret  
thoughts  
Of earthly riches, temporal renown,  
With a religious falsehood self-deceived ;  
For soon the fair white robe they seemed to  
wear  
Of Christianity was splashed with blood,

When, with the fruitless toil renewed in vain,  
Exasperate on an Indian tribe they fell  
After long search, and, failing in their hopes  
Of a sure guide, secured at length though late,  
To point their march to El Dorado, used  
Torture of steel and fire and hounded dog  
On the poor timid wretches to extort  
A knowledge from them which they did not  
    know.

What knew they of the dreams in other lands,  
Of fancy and unreasoning rumour bred,  
That pointed to their own disastrously,  
And met a naysay with vindictive rage  
And further search infatuate of belief?  
Dreams, idle dreams! that haunt the restless  
    mind

With recollection of the primal loss  
Of happiness and everlasting youth,  
Transferred of old to Heaven's securer clime.  
Dreams, idle dreams! worthy alone in this—  
They fire the sluggish mind to energy,  
Whence spring collateral deeds of lofty strain

That, blindly wrought, in benefits endure  
When the false heat that moulded them is cold,  
And the unconscious worker, faint and foiled,  
Has perished in the flames himself had fanned.

To kindly nursing in the native tents,  
Dumb with the sheer severity of woe,  
Gonzalo left his sick, loath to be left,  
Not from a fear of vengeance, for their hopes  
Swallowed all fear : a godlike fearlessness,  
Responsible to none, was in their look,  
Which, weakened though they were and  
    numbering few,  
Struck with paralysis the Indian mind :  
But that their eyes should miss the first far  
    glimpse  
Of unknown empire rising with its towers  
Amid the woods and waters onward still,  
Whither their comrades with impatient steps  
Were certainly advancing.

They, meanwhile,  
Pushed on through dreary flats of marshy  
    land ; —

For the scene changed, and all was desolate :  
The forest thinned, and even shrubs were few ;  
And, save the plashing of incessant rains  
Among the stagnant pools, and the wild cry  
Of passing bird lost in the misty air,  
With distant winds that round the horizon  
sobbed

Like spirits imprisoned in a drear confine  
Searching for freedom, other sound was none ;  
Nor did they seek to break the monotone  
With show of cheerful talk where cheer was  
none.

And here amid the rainy solitude  
A gaunt companion joined them — Famine  
stalked

With fleshless limbs and hollow-staring eyes  
Silent beside them, full of brooding thought,  
Or chewing bitter buds plucked from dank  
boughs,

Or yellow roots that only bred disease,  
From the black soaking soil snatched greedily,  
Yet with blue feverish lips mouthed in disgust.

Here sank amid these melancholy wastes,  
Like worthless weed, full many an ardent life  
Whose value had been left, a cherished hope,  
Endeared by many and many a conscious fear  
In some particular home, in some one heart,  
Hopelessly far in Spain ! And here, perhaps,  
They all had perished in a nameless grave,  
As some have perished daring deeds as great,  
Of whom no record tells, and the stern hum  
Of the big drowsy world had sounded on  
Unbroken in regardless apathy,  
But that the forest with its foodful palms  
And medicinal stores opened once more  
Its wide asylum to the wasted band ;  
And further on beside the Coca's banks  
The friendly shelter of an Indian town,  
Built underneath one patriarchal roof,  
Offered the accepted welcome of a home.

Long time they tarried here—oh, rest was  
sweet !

And the most ardent of them could have sold  
The dowried future, riches, power, renown,

And a salvation from the common blank  
On History's glorious page, in glad exchange  
For the torn blanket and the garlic meal  
Of herdsman on the brownest hills in Spain.  
Sickness, fatigue, and fasting, and the sense  
Of utter homelessness so tamed their pride,  
And they so yearned for human sympathy,  
That all mean occupations, once despised,  
And all the trammels of society  
That gall the fiery spirit to endure,  
Seen in their artificiality,  
Seen from Brazilian woods afar in Spain,  
Were coveted, yea ! realised in dreams ;  
Which so subdued their thoughts to humble  
mood

That frankly, when awake, they fraternised  
With the meek Indians marvelling much that  
men

Visaged so sadly should have dared so far.

But with returning health vigour returned,  
And the old restlessness stirred in their veins,  
And drove them forth a reunited band,

Recruited and with fresh access of hope  
To penetrate the mystery of the wilds.  
The Coca's turbid stream, swollen with the  
rains,  
Seemed in their eyes a clew by which to thread  
The wilderness : it babbled in their ears  
Of distant empire in its lower course  
Whither its waters hastened : nay ! it seemed  
By very force of sympathy like themselves,  
A pioneer peering for hidden lands :  
With what mad joy its current leapt along,  
Reeling and swaying like a drunk Bacchante,  
Startling the temple quiet of the woods  
And revelling through their holiest adytum !  
Not one of all the Spanish band but threw  
A portion of his soul into the stream  
And raced with it along : not one but chode  
The slow delay, the halts, the tedious turnings  
On the swift-rushing river's cumbered banks.  
How enviously they saw sweep on before  
The speeding fleck of froth, the brittle bell,  
Borne on the river's back triumphantly,



Leaving them far behind ! Eagerly now  
They would have hurried, having put their hand  
Upon the running clew-line of the stream  
That promised a safe passage through the dark  
Illimitable wild : nearer they seemed  
With each day's farther march to friends and  
home,

For they had found a highway to the sea  
On whose salt waves no Spaniard could be  
lost.

Yet, as they gazed upon the rolling flood  
And with its pace compared their daily march,  
Time seemed to stagnate ; and their hopes were  
chilled

With the cold fear, deep-seated in their hearts,  
That Fate had caught them in her iron clutch,  
Restraining them to a funereal march  
Timed to have ending in the desert, where  
A sacrificial altar was prepared  
On which their hopes should perish, and their  
lives.

Unspoken were their fears ; they even sought,

As brave men will when Fate is at their neck,  
To conquer by obedience, to annul  
The despotism of dire necessity  
By uncomplaining patience, and the show  
Of liberty that wears as if in sport  
And with a jaunty air a weight of chains.  
So from the painful task they turned not back,  
Nor paused, nor 'plained, but, though with joy-  
less lips  
Flinging upon the air semblance of mirth  
In songs that told the glory of the Cid  
And ballads of the Moors, right steadfastly  
They kept their pensive faces all the while  
Fronting the great Unknown.

The storms were up

One evening when they pitched their wind-  
blown camp  
Under the rocking trees beside the stream.  
But as they slept o'erwearied with their toil  
The tempest sank, and in the sudden calm  
A muffled voice came booming up the stream,  
Deepening and broadening, a continuous roll

As if of thunder breaking through the folds  
Of cloud and night that wrap it seven times  
round,

Until the full-voiced terror drowned the ear  
And wrought such horror in the realm of  
dreams

That some from ineffectual struggling woke  
Screaming; and others started to their feet  
Making the holy sign; and each looked wild  
And strangely on his neighbour, gathering in  
Slowly his personality of pain.

Never before had European ears  
Been so bewildered by such awful noise.  
Was Hell broke loose? Or had the keystone  
slipped

That binds the fabric of the bulging globe?  
Not even Ordas could conjecture make;  
Ordas! who dared the dark volcano's throat  
Courting the horrible, what time the flame  
Of Cortez' genius shot towards Mexico  
Like a clear-burning tongue of arrowy fire  
Scorching the dazzling halls of Montezume;

Even Ordas felt a shrinking of the soul,  
The veteran Ordas! who in one dark night—  
*The Night of Sorrows*—faced a thousand  
    deaths,  
Till the last trace of Fear's alloy was purged  
From his whole heart for ever. Day by day  
The awful sound with fascinating dread  
That drew them towards it, loud and louder  
    swelled  
Till the wide air was one vast sea of sound,  
And from sequestered chambers of the soul  
Strange threatening echoes from their primal  
    sleep  
Rose like a new creation, horrible !  
And scarcely was the terror reasoned down  
When from the high bank of a river cape  
They saw this vast immensity of waters,  
Drawn by the Coca from a thousand caves  
In the far-distant Andes, leap in mass  
Most fearfully into a gulf of air  
Two hundred fathoms down : the volumed foam,  
That without halt makes everlasting plunge,

Whirled from its sphere of consciousness the  
soul

And left the body, emptied of all feeling,  
Tranced in the dumb rigidity of awe.

Nor was their wonder less when farther on  
The narrowing torrent with concentrated strength  
Poured all its length into the channelled rock,  
And through the chasm that pent its thun-  
ders in,

A dreadful depth, unsounded of the sun,  
Toiled in tumultuous agony : the rocks,  
Irrevocably sundered, scowling flung  
Defiance on each other front to front,  
And heedless of the Hell that howled below.

On the sheer brink, grasping with knotted  
roots

The stable rock, a giant cedar leaned  
Forward, who from the forest had advanced  
More dauntless than the rest : him Horror  
seized,

Preventing all return : and on the verge,  
Bound in eternal spell, he gazed below.

With ruthless axe assailed, his giant trunk  
Fell crashing o'er the chasm from bank to  
bank,

The first beam of a bridge : beside him thrown  
Lay lighter palm-trees, in the forest felled :

Gay flowering clusias bound the rolling logs ;  
And o'er the airy walk the Spaniards marched,  
Horseman and foot, struggling and stumbling  
on,

Till all had passed, safe—to a hostile shore.  
For here a shower of darts, blown from the  
woods

Through the long gravatana, sing i' the air,  
And hiss and sting ! Anon the ambuscade  
With hideous yell advance, a martial race  
Accustomed to aggression. But unknown  
To them the sudden flash, the rattling peal  
And fatal ravage of the Spanish arm.

Unknown the graceful terror of the steed  
That speeds and fights and almost thinks for  
man.

The astonished Indians fled, or grovelling lay

As at the feet of centaurs suppliantly  
Conceding all—possessions, children, life.  
Under their conduct through a barren tract  
The Spaniards journeyed, joyful with the hope  
Of rumoured fortune in a distant realm.  
And after weary days corn-fields appeared,  
And cotton plantings, and the huts of men  
Domesticated to a settled life  
Arcadian, but with little store of gold.  
Here fretting much at their enforced delay  
By sickness, hunger, and the present rain—  
For now unceasing torrents night and day  
Poured from the inky sky, and from its bed  
The rising river wandered in gapó,  
Flooding the forest—deeming they had reached  
The edge of empire where the arts of man  
Wage desultory warfare with the wild,  
They sent forth pioneers to make survey  
For further action : these returning told  
Of broken forests, marshes, pools, and ponds,  
And squalid tribes inhabiting in trees,  
Who yet confirmed, in terror, or in fraud,

The rumoured hints of empire, but remote.  
With mingled feelings of despair and hope,  
Impatient of suspense, Gonzalo's mind  
Resolved a final throw with Fate, which failing,  
Farewell the hope that lured him from Quito !  
The river was their only highway—smooth  
And swift its hurrying waters ran ; it only  
Could solve the secret that consumed their soul.  
Thus musing in the doorway of his hut  
With folded arms, and eyes of brooding gloom  
Bent on the muddy flood that tumbled by  
Scourged by the slanting rains, the while his  
men  
Dozed out the weary moments—musing thus,  
Suddenly to his mind a Vision rose,  
A fair large vision of a River Ship  
That idly lay moored to a bank, with sails  
Full-spread and oars, the while the current  
raced  
That should have borne the naiad freely on.  
Starting, he looked again, and it was gone ;  
And th' inscrutable waters whence it rose,



Or seemed to rise, assumed their apathy :  
But not less real seemed the gurgling stream  
Than that aerial ship that sat the wave,  
A moment seen full imaged in the rain,  
Then without warning took mysterious flight !  
“ Saint Jago be my speed,” Gonzalo cried,  
With spirit roused from her inactive mood,  
“ And I will make this glorious fiction fact !  
Why was I blind to the fair dream till now ?  
Did not the whispering waters hint of this ?  
And I, dull schoolboy, understood them not !  
Heaven sent me this to fire my flagging  
zeal

In mild reproach : Did not the lively mind  
Of Vasco Nuñez on the mountain ridge  
Provide a fleet for the yet distant sea ?  
Dull dreamer that I am ! did not the mules  
Of Cortez bear upon their sweltering backs,  
O'er many a mile, to launch them in the lakes  
Of Mexico, the keels of many a bark ?  
And I, with a great river in my eyes  
Daily, and timber for a sea of ships

In these vast forests where each branching  
trunk

Sends seaward with the rushing winds and  
streams

Its wishes to be free—I saw, I heard it not,

And murmured at my own slow-paced delay!

No more of this! No longer on the banks,

Waiting for fortune, housed in idleness;

But on the river—that way lies my path—

To force her tardy coming!"—In his eyes

The light of genius shone, and where they  
darted

Among his listless followers, a new life

Shot through their veins, and cheerfully re-  
membering

That they had set themselves the task of choice,

Like boys at play they went about the work,

Gonzalo guiding. In the sombrous woods

Screened from the incessant rain and gusty  
winds

That shook and pattered on the slim-built shed

Their workshop in the wild, they built a forge;

And soon the ruddy gleams, forth darting far  
Into the cavernous forest, sent their glow  
Upon the sinewy limbs and naked breasts  
Of willing workers bending at their toil  
Or passing to and fro : around the axe  
Here thick the splinters flew whitening the  
ground ;

There, as if wakening from its centuried trance  
And wakening but to look around and choose  
Ground for a resting-place, the stately tree,  
Swaying with all its boughs in the high air,  
Sank down majestic in its fall, as sinks  
Some galleon in mid-ocean in a calm  
With sails unfurled and all her bravery on.  
Some lop the prostrate branches ; on the stocks  
Some stretch the keel, and prop the curving  
frame.

There, half concealed in smoke, a cheerful band  
Of demons move, charring the flameless wood  
For future fuel : others from the pine,  
That stand like patient martyrs ringed with  
fire

Bleeding from many a wound, collect the drops  
Of resin as they fall. One with a box  
Makes circuit of the camp, collecting tax  
Of ear-rings, finger-rings, crosses, and chains  
Of ornamental gold, given willingly,  
With armour-plates of silver framed in steel,  
And helmets thought superfluous. In the furnace

These with the iron shoes wrenched from the  
feet

Of mules and horses, dead or yet alive,  
Flung, in the blaze he stands with one arm  
stretched

To stir the glowing coal; the other plies  
The groaning bellows. Like a Cyclops vast  
His shadow on a background of green leaves,  
Begrimed with smoke, yet glistening in the  
rain,

Toils like a phantom in the noiseless shades  
To idle imitation damned. Anon  
The obsidian anvil rings : chief at the work  
With sleeves rolled up Gonzalo sweats and toils,

Now at the forge, now swinging the wide axe,  
Or straining at a rope, knee touching knee  
Familiar with his fellows, bating nought ;  
And men must follow when their captain bends  
The crest of his nobility to toil.

So from their hands this Argo of the West  
Took shape, and grew, and to their houseless  
hopes

Became a very fortress where they sang.  
To songs that breathe of ancient chivalry  
Opposed to Frank and Moor, in snatches sung,  
The unforced product of a hopeful heart  
Recalling the achievements of its race,  
And in that memory strong—the fair renown  
Bernardo heired from brave Orlando slain  
At Roncesvalles, or when Gonsalez set  
The first stone of Castile ; of Vargas, too,  
Surnamed the Bruiser, and Ramiro old ;  
But most of him Spain's matchless paladin  
The brave knight of Bivár :—to songs, that  
made  
These heroes live in them, the vessel rose,

The structure of their hearts no less than hands,  
Endeared by mutual suffering cheerily borne,  
For in its sides their hearts were built, and not  
Alone their wealth in every driven nail,  
Their very clothing steeped in bubbling pitch  
Thrust in its seams, and hope of life and home.  
Lo ! as they toiled the river-god arose  
Curious above his banks, and his great eyes  
Gleamed through the trees upon them at their  
toil ;

Then, as if found the object of his quest,  
The virgin vessel, with tumultuous rush  
He flung out his long arms, folding her round,  
And like a bridegroom took her to his breast.

And now, their more immediate wishes met,  
The dull reaction came with idle hands  
Of labour wasted : what were one small bark  
Where scarcely forty would suffice to bear  
Their numerous band along? The greater  
part,

With futile efforts every hour renewed,  
Hewed for themselves along the bosky banks

Their woodland way, while in the brigantine  
A scanty complement of sickly men  
Waited, with oars backed in the hurrying rush  
Of the impetuous stream, the slow-paced march  
Of their o'erwearied comrades on the shore.  
So passed laborious weeks, till hunger-forced,  
And tempted by fresh rumours of a land  
Rich in all blessings—food, and towns, and  
gold,

Far down the river where a mightier stream  
Engulfed the Coca, they made general halt  
Arguing the folly of the bridled ship,  
On the free element a captive log,  
Bound to the sluggish measures of the land.

BOOK II.

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By this the happy season was returned  
When to the texture of his cloud-built tent  
Diaphanous the red-faced sun approached,  
Peering into the shrouded world below  
That languished in the rain : the curtains  
    caught

The glory of his burning countenance  
And went ablaze : this way and that they fled,  
And lo ! the lofty firmament serene  
In a wide stretch of deep ethereal blue  
Enroofed the laughing globe. There hung the  
    sun ;

And Nature stretched her praiseful arms aloft  
In distant hills and towering trees and waves



And little humble flowers adoringly  
Towards the benignant Sun, that smiled again !  
Along the forest glades now might you see  
The wavering flight of indolent butterflies  
Whose blue metallic wings lit up the shades  
Like fluttering patches of the fallen sky.  
The yellow troupials whisked from bank to  
bank,  
And hung their pendent nests on the high  
boughs  
That swayed in graceful fringes down the sky.  
While ever and anon the frigate-bird  
With head thrown back came sailing down the  
air  
That streamed above the stream, and dis-  
appeared.  
Ah me ! what wistful faces sad and wan  
And wasted with disease met the red gaze  
Of the returning sun ! How with the heavens  
Their prisoned hopes enlarged, defying bounds,  
Yet chafing at the strange mysterious leash  
That pulled them to the wingless body back.

Meanwhile as if from sudden ambush sprang  
A lurking fever on the pallid frame  
Of stout Gonzalo : from his restless couch  
He turned his hungry eyes upon the priest :  
—“ O holy father, must I here abandon,  
Here within promised access of renown,  
The great hope of my days? And must I die,  
Thus circumstanced with new-awaking life  
In all around me? Water, earth, and air,  
The winds, the sunbeams, insect, bird, and river  
Rejoice unfettered : I am captive bound.  
Oh for the pinions of yon passing bird,  
That I at least might overfly the land,  
And, if but with a transient glimpse, drink in  
The wealth of my possessions ! Hard it is  
To be the heir of what I cannot hold ;  
Harder, indeed, if I have brought you all  
Into this sylvan solitude, apart  
From human ken, only to waste and die  
In unrecorded pain ! And therefore I  
Would send at least, if that I may not go,  
To claim my heritage : call Orellana !

I have marked him fit for noble deeds,  
Approved him bold, ay, somewhat over-bold,  
And think him true. What if the after-race  
Ignoring or in ignorance credit *him*  
With all the honour of the enterprise !  
I shall not mind it, though it cut me now  
Even to anticipate. Vain fear ! 'tis *mine* ;  
Nor have I less the greatness that I feel  
Wanting the confirmation of the crowd."

"A noble deed," gravely the priest replied,  
"Done in obscurity or deepest night,  
Needs not the shouting of the multitude  
To make it fact,—yea ! and if but conceived  
When other hands receive it at the birth,  
Stolen or adopted, none the less remains  
In highest truth the author's. A brave mind,  
Strong in the consciousness of native worth  
As hero in his mail, will estimate  
The praise of men as but a needless cloak  
Thrown over armour : And yet true it is  
The purple trappings and the nodding plume  
Become the warrior well ;—but they are less

His own delight than worn to pleasure friends.  
Think you the great Columbus, when the light  
First showed him where the long-lost hemi-  
sphere

Lay sleeping in the void—think you he felt  
At that abandoned hour of soundless night  
Less sure of his own greatness, as he stood  
On the lone poop surrounded by the dark  
While Europe far behind in her grey walls  
Chattered and gossiped through her daily  
rounds

Forgetful of him quite, or mindful only  
As of a fond enthusiast pitiable—  
Than when, after long months of secret great-  
ness,

He told to courts his prophecy fulfilled,  
And Europe, pausing in her mill-horse round,  
Turned all her million eyes to the grey seas,  
The riddle of whose mystery was read,  
And hailed him Finder of a Second World?  
And yet, when all is said, be sure his mind  
Chose her seat well,—not on the unstable base

Of airy speech of men, which a side wind  
Blowing sinister with capricious gust  
Can sweep as swift away as castled clouds  
Before an evening gale,—not on renown  
As men translate the word, an empty sound,  
Which themselves give and often give awry,  
And then withhold, and with as little cause ;  
But on the steadfast rock, the immortal stance  
Of consciousness of a great duty done.

In that one word all honest greatness hides,  
And each may grasp it in his several sphere,  
For that is duty that a man can do  
And that beseems a man—all else is vain."

He ended, but the germinating thought  
Grew in Gonzalo's mind. Upon the priest  
His large eyes gazed in silence till his mind,  
Slow to appropriate the strength-giving truth,  
Returned the dictum like a lingering echo—  
"Yea ! that is duty that a man can do,  
And mine is now to send, not mine the event,  
Since that I may not go : call Orellana !"—

A young man still, though in his auburn hair

Time's silvery threads were spreading, and his  
brow

Had gathered more than one long line of grey.  
But in his eye the wandering light of youth  
Still showed a mind unsettled in its aim,  
Though powerful to achieve what others  
planned.

A dreamer was he in his hours of ease,  
And careless of preferment undeserved  
By action of his own. A volunteer,  
He came from drowsing by the torpid banks  
Of Guadiana to the Western world,  
Smit with the hope of some great deed of  
fame,—

Which so absorbed his soul that lesser gain  
For its own sake, or as a central germ  
That tarries the slow-fostering of the years,  
Was blown contemptuous to the passing winds ;  
For he would be at once i' the eye o' the world,  
Or live and die among the shadows seen  
By none. Yet think not he was idle all,  
Waiting to strike and strike but once for fame :

His sword was ever at his chief's command,  
And what he undertook his very daring  
And utter recklessness, or rather say  
Firm confidence of the event, made sure and  
fast

A fact in history. But mark his pride  
Or self-neglect, or call it what you will  
—After such enterprise he shunned to meet  
His grateful leader ; and his comrades' praise  
Around the barrack-fire or in the tent,  
In town or field, fell cold upon his ear :  
Upon his heel he turned, and, listlessly  
Reclining on his couch with half-shut eyes,  
Or roaming vacantly in lonely places,  
They found him, and gave up the thankless task.  
Or if importunate the public voice  
Threatened ovation—he would seize his cloak ;  
His sword was ever belted to his side ;  
And disappear. Thus had he joined the band  
A day's march late that journeyed from Quito  
Under Gonzalo. Thus he clipt the winglets  
Of his own growing fame ; for he would soar

At once i' the eye o' the world, or sink unseen  
Among the shadows, known to none or all.  
—"If I have sent for thee," Gonzalo said,  
"'Tis not to speak thy praise; for what thou  
    hast  
Deserving praise thou hast from Heaven, and  
    there  
The honour lies; and that thou knowest un-  
    moved  
By voice of man; and therefore praise is thine  
In that I choose thee from among the rest,  
Deeming thee loyal, who hast well approved  
The motive of thy acts, to take my place  
And duteously fulfil my vows to Spain  
And to my brother: thou shalt take command  
Of this our ark, the brigantine—that bears  
The fortunes of our expedition: I  
Commit them to thy charge. Do thou descend  
Whither the Indians tell. Of some great  
    stream  
That rolls its ink and flings its yellow foam  
Around some central capital they tell.



There glory waits thee, ripened to thy hook ;  
But bring me back a sheaf—a few stray ears  
I surely well may claim ! We tarry here.  
Our hopes, our very life goes with thee ! See  
Thou prove no alien ! Choose thy men, and  
go !”—

And Orellana knelt, and kissed the hand  
Of great Gonzalo, rose, and nothing said  
But turned in act to go. With searching eyes  
Gonzalo gazed upon his soldier bearing  
As wishful for some proof of loyalty ;  
Then, as it came not, turning to the priest—  
“Thou, too,” he said, “wilt go.”—“Nay, here I  
stay,”

The father answered ; “tempt me not, my son,  
With the fruition of an earthly fame  
Bought with a bartered conscience ! Even now  
The Devil is at mine elbow—I can feel  
His fingers on my shoulder, in mine ear  
His hot breath urging me to make a league  
With him and thee and Heaven ; take thine  
offer,

Abandon thee with all the show of friendship,  
Compound with Heaven for a brief course of  
sin

By future sanctity—the greater saint  
And more acceptable to heaven the more  
I give my passions rein ! ‘ And what is he ?  
A sick man dying in the wilderness,  
A withered stalk upon the tree of life  
That will be green no more ’—Satan, avaunt !  
And thou, Gonzalo !—these are devil’s words  
That urge my going, put into thy mouth  
By thy great enemy and mine and man’s :  
Speak them no more ! For, grant I leave thee  
here

And go to what great glories who can doubt,  
How shall I hear and see amid the glare  
And blaze of triumph the dispassionate voice  
And the white star of duty ? till perchance  
The tumult has sunk down and the time gone  
For doing duty ? Oh, the Devil ever  
Wraps round a man the mantle of his praise  
Spoke by the yelling multitudes, whene’er

He means to hide the irrevocable chance  
Of a great duty offered by the Lord !—  
So tempt me not !”

The words were vehement  
And uttered as in anger—eyeballs starting,  
And the full veins upon his beaded brow  
Relieved like whipcord. From his pillow raised  
Upon one elbow, breathless, pallid, fixed  
As stares a statue with its marble eyes  
Rounded with wonder, and with doubt con-  
gealed,

Gonzalo gazed upon the speaker. In  
The hush that followed a cicada ran  
Across the open doorway, on the roof  
Outside the tapping of a woodpecker  
Was heard, and one low distant moan subdued  
Its anguish in the woods. The father's eye  
Fell, and a chill ran through his frame : “ For-  
give,”

He said, in a strange wearied tone  
Altered and low : “ Forgive the unwonted heat ;  
For thou know'st not, my son, the carnal heart

That beats beneath this mantle, as do I !”

Sudden, and at a bound, Gonzalo leapt  
From his sick-bed, and with a strong man's  
voice—

“ What guarantee have I, if thus the storms  
Of wild ambition shake the Holy Church  
Personified in thee—what proof have I  
That Orellana will not play me false,  
Self-duped in sending him? Go ! call him  
back !

I, I myself—Here by sheer strength of will  
I fling this fever from me !—It is mine ;  
The glory I have traced to this far haunt  
No hand shall seize but mine ! And bring my  
mail—

I, I myself will head the enterprise.  
No proxy suits with me. This very hour—  
Nay, on the instant—stand aside !”

For here  
The father caught him staggering to the door,  
And forced him back, panting and flushed and  
faint

Upon the couch. "Dost thou withstand me?"

"I

Withstand thee not—it is the hand of Heaven !

Is this the resignation thou didst feel ?

Such resignation is but the result

Of weakness to rebel. If thou wouldst live

And heir the honour Heaven intends for thee

Obeys me !"—for he struggled yet to rise.

"I have hid nothing from thee. Therein lies

My error : but that I am true to thee

Believe, and let me show it by remaining.

Ask me no more to go : I will not go !

My duty is with thee—and with these others,

Our numerous sick, that must remain behind ;

But chief with thee ; for thou art marked by

Heaven

For some great work, and I have charge of  
thee !

Only live thou to do it. It is thine

If one go at thy bidding though thy hand

Should never finger the dictated work ;

And that a servant here relieve thy hand

The hand of God upon thee laid in sickness  
Gives clear assurance 'tis the will of Heaven.

—As for this Orellana, let him go

Since one must go and thou hast chosen him !

And for those fierce temptations that in thought

Assailed my soul a short while since—of this

Be sure, no fiercer storm, no tempest half so  
fierce

Can Satan raise in Orellana : ' I,'

(Thou say'st ; for I can read thy inmost thoughts,

Knowing my own so well) ' If I,' thou say'st,

' A son of Holy Church can be so tempted,—

If I a green branch burn so fiercely, what

Swift-tongued destruction must lick up the  
dry?'

—Am I a green branch? I have read my life

And studied my whole nature : that I am

A son of Holy Church I know, and boast,

Unworthy though I be ; but Holy Church

Gives not a change of nature : I have here

Under these pious vestments the wild pulse

Of warrior, and—root out the infirmity,

O Heaven !—I feel a tigerish instinct stir  
Even in the pastoral service of the Church  
If bloodshed would but frighten to the fold  
The heathen flocks that roam the wilderness !  
To thee I make confession of my weakness  
That this confession may be as a chain  
To bind me closer to thee ! I believe  
That in our band no breast is visited  
With half so fierce temptations, nor no heart  
Half so susceptible of earthly fame !  
And thou mightst but commission me to ruin,  
To send me girt with equal power with him  
This tool, this Orellana, whose dull heart,  
Though stout to dare what others planned, was  
never

Stirred with the nobler passion to create  
And carve self-confident for his own ends.  
Fear not ; this tool will do the work for thee  
More faithfully than I thy truer friend,  
And I shall yet be saved for thee and Heaven !”

More was there in his looks and in his tone  
Than in the words, uttered impulsively

And wildly ordered, to assure Gonzalo

The revelation was indeed sincere.

He stretched him out his hand ; quickly the  
priest

As catching at salvation caught the grasp

Ere yet half way, and held it tight and long.

Gonzalo's generous heart returned the pressure,

And " I have known thee long," he said ; " but  
never

Known truly till this hour. With reckless hand

Thou hast loosened for me a prop on which

I leaned as on a hill—nay ! hear me out ;

There need be now no secrets 'twixt us twain :

For I had thought thee steadfast as the Earth,

Infallible as Heaven : Thou art, instead,

Even in thy weaknesses, thy doubts of self,

Thy struggles with the flesh, and all thy fears,

A brother on whose breast I yet may lean,

If not with such security as once,

Surely with a new sympathy that both

Imparts and gathers strength. And so, I trust  
thee ;



Go he, stay thou, thy will is wholly mine ! ”

While yet he spake Day fell ; the sunset spilt  
Its crimson on the waters ; down the stream  
With a great rush it sped, purpling the wood,  
The river-banks, the brigantine, the air,  
With the reflection of its sanguine glow.  
It was a world of red—red leaves, red waves,  
Red faces ; e'en Gonzalo's pallid face  
Took on the hue of health : all things were  
dyed

In the rich rubious translucent streams  
Of the great fountain welling in the West !

The Father's eyes were on Gonzalo, his  
Looked wistfully out through the open door  
Of the rough wooden shed—his hospital—  
Upon the evening glory of the world :  
The brigantine lay moored within his gaze  
Motionless, save where the eye might note  
A certain rhythmic movement of her mast  
Obedient to the lapping of the stream.

What thoughts were his, what longings or what  
fears,

He uttered not, save that unconsciously  
By pressure of the hand fast locked in his  
He intimated to the watchful priest  
A spirit busy within him forcing up  
The gateways of the future. Thus they sat,  
The Father with his broad back towards the  
door

Shrouded in shadow. On Gonzalo's face  
The red light died away, the air grew dim ;  
Wild dissonant cries answering to dissonant  
cries

Of birds and chattering apes, unearthly screams !  
Ran like a desecration down the aisles  
Of the wide-vaulted wood. Low in the shade,  
Appearing here and reappearing there,  
Tiny initial sparks of wavering fire  
Twinkled about, till o'er the tufted trees  
Diana raised her argent arc and shot  
The first dart of her beauty through the gloom !

The solemn Night was hers : high o'er the  
woods

That underneath spread like a sea of leaves,

O'er which the night-wind moaned and made  
no stir

Among the billows and reposeful waves,  
She walked serene in chosen loneliness  
As if her meditations would outlast  
Eternity. The wanderers were asleep  
Wrapt in oblivious visions all, save one,  
The holy Father : He, from where he sat,  
Beside Gonzalo's couch, gently unclasped  
The sleeper's feverish hand, and gathering up  
The rustlings of his robe, stole from the shed  
With more than woman's care. At the low  
door

Free from the shadow of the shed he stood  
Full in the moonlight. First he glanced to  
heaven,

Then on the width of waters weltering by  
Fixed his keen gaze as if he would enforce  
Confession of the secret of their goal :  
More stealthily the waters seemed to glide  
Under his searching eye ; and longer he,  
Rapt in a reverie of human life,

The mystery of its birth and course and end,  
Had stood, entranced under the mystic spell  
Of moonlight on a river yet unnamed  
Lying familiarly, but that a fish  
Leapt up the stream and sank with peaceful  
    plunge  
Amid a spray of diamonds ; whereat  
The Father started, brushed the dreams away  
With open hand across his troubled brow,  
Then with uplifted face looked straight to  
    heaven,  
The silver moonlight on his moving lips  
As if in prayer : from the pure deeps above  
That from the feet of God flow down to earth  
His spirit drank assurance, rest, and faith,  
And was refreshed.

                                Along the river-bank  
He passed to where the watch half leaned, half  
    lay  
Snoring against a tree : his head thrown back  
Revealed his naked throat that glimmered white  
Beneath a beard black-pointed toward the moon.

With angry hand he twitched the sleeper's  
beard—

“Rouse thee! but question not—where lies  
to-night

Young Sanchez?” And the sentinel abashed,  
Awkward, and dazed, with spear-encumbered  
hand

Rubbing his chin, glanced wildly round the  
camp,

Then pointing with the other—“Near the bank  
In the big tent beside the tall assaí:

’Tis he relieves me.” “Let him relieve thee  
now!

If I mistake not, thou art one of those

Impatient of preferment, and unfit

To fill the meanest post with the first want,

Fidelity: go, house thee in a sheet;

And when—for fate gives sloth a length of  
years—

They ask thee to recount at home in Spain

The achievements of thy youth, boast of thy  
deeds,

But in thy boasting, blush to recollect  
This night's disgrace ! Comrade ! take this,  
and go—

A year of loyal service, borne with pain,  
And left to speak its own reward, will scarce  
Efface the blot upon thy name to-night !”

Came from beneath a tall paxinba's roots,  
That as on tiptoe stood stretching its neck  
Above its forest *confrères*, Hernan Sanchez,  
Equipped for outpost duty. Straight he  
marched

And steady as a tower to where the priest  
Waited his coming : “ Art thou one,” said he,  
“ Of Orellana's band ? ” The soldier bowed—  
“ One of the fifty I.” “ A volunteer ? ”  
“ Sought out,” replied the youth with modest  
pride,

“ Ere yet I knew to intercede to go ! ”  
“ Thou art Gonzalo's standard-bearer ? ” “ Yea ;  
By his own gift that honour do I bear ! ”  
“ And he has honoured thee ! requite it, youth !  
—Tell me, for youth has still a live ideal

By which to dress its conduct, who is thine?"

"The Marquis, ere we left Quitó; since then,  
Oh, need'st thou ask? our noble chief Gonzalo."

"Thou art not one of those who worship still  
The rising star?" "Thou wouldst insult me,  
priest?

—Prove me, and then upbraid me!" "Nobly  
said;

'Tis for that end I come, to prove and—praise  
thee!

For when thy conscience, speaking in thy breast,  
Shall praise thy conduct, hear in it the voice  
Of honest men; among which rank am I,  
And own no other. Thou wilt go to-morrow  
Under the leadership of Orellana  
To great discoveries, freedom, life, and fame.  
Let not the whirl of fortune turn thy head:  
Remember thou thy fealty to Gonzalo;  
*He* goes with you—misunderstand me not—  
For Orellana is but as thyself,  
Nor more nor less, divested of the power  
Lent him by great Gonzalo: honour it,

Be jealous of it in thy leader's charge ;  
But see thou make no transfer of thy faith  
To him the man that wields it !—I had said  
The same to Orellana following thee  
Hadst thou been chosen to the chief command.  
There is no treason in my counsel, then,  
But truest loyalty to those that go  
And those that stay : we constitute a State  
Commissioning you with powers which you  
    may use  
Against the State that grants them. This he  
    knows,

This Orellana ; and I have no cause  
To doubt his faithfulness : assist him, thou,  
To keep his faith—but slay him if he fail !”

This said, abrupt he turned and disappeared  
Back to his post in the low wooden shed  
Where in delirious sleep Gonzalo lay  
Tossing.

    The camp next morning was astir  
As dawn crept up the water : with the first  
Long level lance of pioneering light



That struck the tall paxinba's topmost plume  
Ten thousand voices woke, and the dim wood  
And the grey air burst from the trance of Night ;  
And screams and shrieks and sharp dis severed  
notes

That intimated freedom rent the sky.  
Flocks of white, green, and scarlet parroquets  
Leapt from their perch ; thousands of toucans  
flew

With outstretched bill seeking their morning  
meal :

Here on a heavy-podded inga's branch  
Some twenty would alight with clumsy foot,  
Shaking the ripe fruit ready for the drop  
Into the stream a hundred feet below :  
The nimble trogon with obedient wing  
Skimming the mid-air, swerved with easy grace  
And caught the falling fruit and disappeared.  
Herons, and terns, and gulls innumerable  
Followed the sinuous current, or made halt  
Upon a floating tree, or on the marge  
Searched for their food among the water-weeds.

While ever and again a kingfisher,  
With back of glossy green, shot down the river  
Like volant ball ; and golden orioles,  
And troupials, banded black and yellow,  
whisked

From nest to mid-air and from mid-air back  
To slender purse-like nest depending fair  
From the high branches all adown the sky.  
Amid the lower shrubs that fringed the strip  
Between the wood and water, bush-shrikes ran,  
Their long loose silky feathers fluttering fierce  
With joy, as they impaled with corneous beak  
Their insect-victims on the hard-barked bough.  
Meanwhile the golden disc of the new sun  
Shone through the trees like a great shield of  
gold :

Whereat the moon grew faint, and stole away  
Worn to transparent thinness in the West ;  
And as the round of red rejoicing Day  
Rose free at last of forest-screen, she slipped  
Ghost-like behind the shelter of the hills.

How do familiar scenes, daily beheld,

And daily held to be the stereotype  
Of long-traditioned nature meaning nothing,  
Grow suddenly significant ! What power,  
Ebbing and flowing in the speechless air,  
And growing half-articulate in the cries  
Of birds, and in the whispers of the woods,  
And smiling in the sun, or in the cloud  
Frowning, gives character and mood and mind  
To dull or idle nature?—Nay, what power  
In man informs the brutish earth with soul,  
Shooting a meaning into clods and stones  
To prop a hope or feed a cherished fear?  
'Tis not in nature : but the God in man,  
As man was God-created from the clay,  
Breathes into nature mystery of meaning,  
Then wrests her riddle to his own desire,  
Strengthened and propped by natural sympathy.  
So to the nobler of that hopeful band  
Whom Orellana gathered to his cause  
Came with a speedier course that morning's sun,  
And larger life was on the water's marge  
Pulsing with warmer flow in every wing.

Nature expectant of a famous deed  
That day should see commence was earlier up.  
In all they saw there was a harmony  
Benevolent to their purpose, and the heavens  
Smiled in consent of all their hopes and  
schemes.

Under the smiling morn the patient bark  
Slept idly on the shallows : hasty feet  
Struck heavily on the gangway—a slim plank  
That swung from shore to ship; but still she  
dreamed

Rocked in the eddying waters : fruit sun-dried  
And mandioc meal in bags and boxes borne  
On willing backs were hurried up the plank  
And tumbled in the vessel : with more heed  
Guns, and gunpowder in a chest ill spared  
From a diminished stock, were stored ; and  
now

A hasty meal was snatched or from the stream  
By flowering thorn-hook, or from sweet assaí  
In clusters of small purple berries struck  
By climber with his pole : then came the priest

And in the ears of all confirmed the charge  
Of Orellana, limiting his power,  
And asking his acceptance of the trust  
In words which Orellana gave,—and gave  
Besides fealty in clear well-ordered phrase  
Both for himself and men to great Gonzalo.  
Thus satisfied the Father caused advance  
The leader and his fifty from the rest ;  
And while they knelt, dinting the forest spores  
And choking many a weedy cassia's bells  
And flowered convolvulus, around the priest,  
He solemnised promise and enterprise  
By special mass appointed by the Church  
For mariners at sea, and shrived them all.

The ritual o'er, like schoolboys freed from  
school

They raced on board the galley, swung her  
round

Instinct with life into the middle channel  
Churning the stream, ere scarce the tense-  
drawn rope

That kept her to her moorings snapt across

And curling sprayed the water. Then like bird  
Hovering in mid-air on vibrating pens  
Ere yet it flies a straight course down the gale,  
She, quivering with the sudden keen delight  
Of freedom, all her dreams shook to the air,  
A moment with backed oars stood on the  
stream,

Then, thrusting out like one her twenty paddles,  
Dipped with a thought in the thin element,  
And bounded forth between her lines of foam,  
That widened in her wake, and waned away  
Amongst the tumbling river ere the cheer  
Of God-speed ! from their comrades on the  
bank

Ceased in the rowers' ears. Their answering  
hail

Came back as from another world, faint-voiced  
And far and past recall. And long they gazed  
Ranged on the bank like statues of despair  
Staring with strained and film - o'erspreading  
eye

After a disappearing hope : they saw

Rise on the bark now dwindled to a bird  
The white wing of her sail ; and as the curve  
Of wooded shore denied them farther view  
It made partial amends by sending back  
An echo of the boat-song sifted drear  
Through the dim arches of the pillared palms.

Sank from the light and life of cheerful day  
The lingering echoes falling restfully  
Into the caves of silence,—as distil  
Through chinks and cracks to intramontane  
wells

The drops which twinkled on the tempest's  
wing

In rainbow lustre ere the tumult rose  
That dashed them with a myriad diamonds  
more

Into the surging heather ! Sank the strain  
From healthful morn : yet through the curtain  
door

Which severs dreamland and the drear abode  
Of shadows from the light of open day  
A thrice-enfeebled wail ran plaintively :

It crossed Gonzalo's spirit in the dark,  
Labouring belated like a lonely bird  
Above a moaning sea through cloud and storm  
And falling stars and ruin and eclipse ;  
And in his sleep wrought on mysteriously  
The patient tossed his arms in weak despair.

The bark shot onward into unknown scenes.  
So shot the ray of new-created light  
Into chaotic gloom : so bursts the dawn  
Of knowledge on the wondering infant mind.  
Chaos, surprised with happiness, looked grim,  
Laughed, and danced into cosmic loveliness :  
Even so the mind breaks into rapturous singing  
And leaps with joy of an immortal pulse.  
And did not the new scenes laugh and look  
glad,  
And shape their gladness into dance and song,  
To be thus visited and viewed of man,  
Far wandering but arrived at last, though late,  
To claim his due inheritance ?

The river  
Proud of the burden bore the heirs along



Of all the Amazons, sang at the prow  
The songs of hope, and at the helm repeated  
The achievements of the past in choral praise.  
The little waves that sparkled in the sun,  
And smiled, and ran hand linked in tiny hand,  
Gay messengers transmitted from the bows,  
Lisped to the crowded banks, and venturous  
      reeds

Advanced to meet them in the shallow bays,  
"The long-expected heirs are passing by."  
Whereat the rushes waved their bannerets  
And the bright banks broke into brighter bloom.  
The forest formed its ranks along the shores  
And crowded forward, where the river bent,  
With homage and oblation long delayed  
But now extended in each laden bough.  
The very airs, the wandering spies of heaven,  
That roam from Alp to Andes, seeing all  
Man's glories and the grandeur of the world,  
Caught the contagious glow of sympathy  
With wave and wood, and whispered flattering  
      tales.

The homage and the tribute and the triumph  
Were seen and felt by all as with one heart.  
For as the hours fled and the distance grew  
Between them and their comrades left behind  
They gathered in, mutely, by slow degrees  
Community of feeling, hopes and fears,  
That merged at last incorporate in the bark  
Into identity. Thus animate  
Forward they sped with ever-joyful leaps  
Along the reaches of the mighty stream.  
Suns rose and set paving their level path  
With robes of scarlet and with cloth of gold.  
Night flung submissive at their fearless feet  
Her gemmed tiaras and her strings of stars,  
The dowry of old Time : the silver moon  
From a full horn rained tribute down the sky  
And widened nightly in admiring wonder,  
While still the attendant winds buzzed flatter-  
ingly  
Of marvels that should open on their view,  
And willingly gave up their wonted freedom  
To guide and retinue the sons of Spain

Through valley lands long centuries known to  
them.

On swept the brig borne on the river's back,  
While hopes like cherubim flew on before,  
Their white wings rustling ever round the bows  
Or ever disappearing in a flash  
Of dazzling plumes at every vista's end  
Or shady turning ! On—no need for pause :  
The river gave them of its watery stores ;  
The trees held out their fruitage, and they  
plucked  
With unstayed course, sparingly, as they passed  
The offered bounty of the burdened bough.

It was the noon of Night : a far-off moon  
Looked from the lofty firmament aslant  
Down on the speeding brigantine through twists  
Of stationary cloud. The winds blew soft,  
Rocking the slumb'rous trees ; and all was  
still,—

Save where the forest-hum for ever in  
Incipient burst of speech deceived the listener ;

And there was, too, the babble and the throb  
Of lapsing waters felt along her keel  
Lifting the vessel, as a cross is lifted  
Gently upon the bosom of a nun  
Inhaling and exhaling in her dreams  
Regular breath. The helmsman at his post  
Dreamt of Castile. High on the forward deck  
Stood one whose brow the moon with cooling  
beams

Tiara'd,—while with sleepless glance he ques-  
tioned

His future of the stars :

“ Say ye who stand

A scripted mystery on creation's wall,  
Revealed by night, invisible in the sun,—  
If in your radiance wrapt from human ken,  
As ye are wrapt in all-unfolding Day,  
The story of my destiny is traced !  
And I may know but that I may fulfil  
With firmer, bolder heart Heaven's hopes in  
me! . . .

“ Faith in myself I have not : I am but

A waif upon the tide of human life,  
Helmed and commanded by a higher power,  
Whose fingers on my fate I seem to feel  
Shaping my course, and leaving me,—as I  
Shape for this passive brig its unknown way  
At intervals upon the drifting stream. . . .

“ Let me indulge the fancy : ships there are  
That rule the waves awhile : there waits for  
them

A smiling surface and a hidden rock.  
Some, with contemptuous gesture tossed to  
land

A broken wreck, waste publicly away.  
Others the ocean slips from, leaving them  
Upon a barren beach, their ventures o’er,  
Henceforth to blister in the sun, and rot.  
—Each has its various end.—But who would  
see

In all the necessary whirls and shifts  
Of fortune that befall or floating logs  
Or floating ships the hand of God, save him  
Who gives his god indeed impossible power

But less of wisdom than himself to guide it? . . .

“Chance rules it all ; or else the fool is right  
Who, rather than seek out with patient search  
The mighty Maker, makes one for himself  
And worships his own idol—not less surely  
Than blacks in Africa their wooden blocks ;  
—Worships a baby god who takes delight  
In dropping nuts into a forest pool  
To hear the lonely splash, in whirling logs  
Along the barren seas, and puffing leaves  
Rustling and red around an idle hill. . . .

“And may not man, superior though he be,  
To whom with nuts and logs and leaves the  
same

Final decay succeeds an idle life,  
Be equally the abandoned toy of chance  
And orphaned of his Maker? . . .

“’Tis not so

With him : inferior nature, to itself  
Left and the governance of man, repeats  
Its patient function ordered from without  
Incapable of will ; but man is free,

Though, still partaking of the lumpishness  
Of mortal earth, he be the slave of law  
So far ; and may be wholly ; to the which  
His grosser nature drags him, drugs his will,  
And wraps the aspiring spirit flesh-encased  
In most ignoble slothfulness and sleep.  
But souls of noble possibility,  
Though lapped in indolence, shall rouse at last  
And will their liberty and laugh at law.  
Among which rank am I ; no more a boat  
Beached among shells and shingle, or afloat  
Upon a drifting current idly borne  
Helmless, and having no far haven marked,  
Its free-determined aim, beyond the roar  
Of surges and cyclones, and past the maze  
Of atoll, archipelago, and shoal.

“ ’Tis flow-tide with me, and I feel the chance  
That has withdrawn its strong sustaining waves  
From underneath Pizarro’s stranded bows  
Lapping my fortunes and upbearing me.  
But here I ask no more, would trust no more  
To idle chance, but, master of my will,

Wrest from the laws of gross inferior earth  
My future, and contrive with strenuous care  
Of my own choice a famous destiny. . . .

Would Heaven but give assurance of my wish  
And of my hope, confirming them to faith  
That I am free and master of myself,  
How would the token I entreat in vain  
Nerve me with triple strength to bend the laws  
Of nature to my will ! I have been long  
A very tool to other men, with which  
They smote to their own purposes the chains  
Which nature would impose ; then flung me by,  
A disregarded and inglorious—fool.

“ Enough of this ! Hereafter for myself  
I work—I plan, I live, I joy in freedom !  
Chance favours me ; Nature, already tamed,  
Turns with obsequious smile her sympathy  
Upon me ; and the stars—if ever stars  
Registered in their rubric on Heaven’s door  
A lofty deed, may have some trace of mine.  
Never,—if in obedience to the priest  
I, backward toiling, bear my own deserts



And fling them at the feet of a Pizarro  
Disburdening me of glory all my own.  
But verily if onward on this highway,  
Which ends indeed at Charles's throne in Spain !  
The question is—backward or forward, then :  
Back to obscurity, to keep my faith  
With one who robs me of the fame I win ;  
Onward to fame and freedom, life and power,  
—And ignominy of a broken word  
And an abandoned friend ? ”

He paused, and weighed  
The question, while his hand balanced a sword  
Mechanically mimicking his mind.

“ Give sign, ye stars,  
Ye voiceless keepers of Heaven's closed archives,  
That hold his former and his latter will !  
Say, is it Heaven's great will that having had  
The reins of this behemoth-river thrust  
Into my hands, I fling them in the air  
To the wild hands of hundreds stretched to  
grasp them ;

Or that I bridle him through all his bounds  
And ride him to the sea ? ”

Just then a star  
By unseen fingers lightly disengaged  
Slid from the zenith in a line of light,  
That was reflected in the river’s course,  
Eastward o’er hidden empire to the sea.  
It fell into the scale-pan of the balance  
That symbolled progress in the thoughtful mind  
Of Orellana : doubt, distrust of self,  
Loyalty, and danger, and delay and fear  
Flew up and kicked the beam.

“ Be this,” he cried  
With arm upraised, “ the signal that I seek !  
It woos me down the water ; in its flight  
It sped like arrow from the bow of Heaven  
Shot o’er the region that I yet shall rule  
To guide me to my kingdom !—’Tis enough !  
There is no wrong in following Heaven’s decree,  
There is no faltering fear : Heaven’s eyes behold  
Me, and my hopes are histories in Heaven ! ”

The steersman Sanchez, dreaming o'er the  
helm

Of tranquil ease and household joys obscure  
Afar in fair Castile, roused by the words,  
Looked up to see his leader on the poop  
Transfigured in the moonlight, falling clear  
Of cloud or bough around him, by resolve  
To something more than seems in common  
man.

On o'er the olive pathway of the stream  
Through solitudes lit up with radiant suns  
Or steeped in mystic moonlight, joyfully  
With song upon their lips or lapped in dream  
Calmly they glided, trusting in the calm  
Reliant face of their still-thoughted leader.

One day at noon, rounding a river cape  
Clothed with a lofty forest, ere they knew  
They slid into a black tumultuous stream  
Of broken waves that hurrying from the West  
Made sudden swerve to southward, drinking  
swift

In its fierce wrath the placid olive wave,  
And swirling the frail bark caught in the rapids  
Round in the yellow foam. By dexterous twist  
Of rudder aided by auxiliar oar  
They shot into still water, and lay to  
Upon a sandy bottom on the lee  
Of a large island where in former years  
The rivers mingling met,—now far below.  
And here they landing looked in vain for tower,  
Temple, or teocalli o'er the waste  
Of woodland stretching round—listened in vain  
For cymbal or for drum where in far glades  
Or on sequestered plains religious rites  
Might then be celebrating, or great chiefs  
Or borla'd monarch holding with his queen  
Peaceful review or mustering troops for war.  
And here they fell in passionate dispute  
Of farther action, frequently renewed,  
Yet ever ending in divisive taunt  
And more divisive silence. To go back  
Now that the goal was reached were to preserve  
The faith of gentlemen. This was opposed,—

It were the work of months against the stream  
Toiling, and even if the work were done  
What could it bring Gonzalo or themselves  
But disappointment of a fostered hope  
Of fame to him ; to them the mute reproach,  
Loud-tongued perchance, of disappointed men ?  
Then to go forward—that were breach of faith,  
Shameful desertion of confiding friends  
And blindfold rush through danger ;—or it  
were

Bravery, and reason, and a sure reward.  
And so they strove, through the long hours of  
noon,

With the strange Stygian river's dismal hue,  
That would receive no glory from the sun,  
Reflected in their faces. In the gaps  
And pauses of their talk, one heard the note  
Of drowsy bell-bird, snow-white o'er the shade  
Of mountain-forest faint and far away.

At length up sprang the leader : he had  
watched  
With vigilant eye the varying tide of talk,

And now broke silence. "In this camp," he said,

"There are two parties where there should be one.

—One in the brig, while I command her, one  
And only one there must be !" Here he paused,  
Then with his scabbard on the firm smooth  
sand

He drew a parting line : "You that believe  
I should command that party, cross this line  
And range yourselves beside me : here stand  
I !"

And stepped across with sword unsheathed.  
Many

With acclamation leapt across the line ;  
Some crossed in silence ; and, with lingering  
step,

Others ; till only one at last remained,  
Young Sanchez. Him the sole inhabitant  
And prisoner of a melancholy isle  
They left, his brave face turned from them  
away

Proudly resentful of their mocks and prayers,  
And loyal to Gonzalo. Off they fled  
Like unreturning arrow swiftly loosed  
From a strong bow new bent. Free was their  
course

Upon the hurrying rapids down the stream,  
Yet aided still by twinkling oar, and sail  
Hoised on the rattling yard. Their wish was  
now

Under their fresh-elected chief to unwind  
The mystery of the river to the main,  
Glance at the virgin glories of its coasts,  
Unfold to Europe their discovery,  
And claim its government, as Cortez claimed  
The rule of Mexico.—What thrill was theirs  
Of still-succeeding ecstasy to trace  
The panorama of the Amazons  
Throughout the mighty river's thousand links,  
Past selva and savanna to the sea !  
What joy to feel their unimpeded bark  
Leap in responsive rapture light along  
As if, like some new creature come to life

Upon congenial element, it shared  
The sanguine hopes, the mad impatient pulse  
And keen delight of motion swift and free  
That made them demigods, body and mind !  
O, in those days and fairy-visioned nights,  
Feeding on manna hopes that come no more  
To this old worn-out earth, they lived indeed,  
Breathing heroic air, and lifted high  
Above the sordid cares that creep within  
The guarded ease of villa nests, and make  
The peasant's term a pitiable strife  
With Hunger sniffing wolf-like at the door !

Forest and forest passed them, whirling west  
With all their unclaimed grandeur : hill on hill  
In the far distance, capped with snow-white  
quartz

Thin-veined with gold, rose up and sank adown,  
Doing them stately homage : shady alleys  
And sunlit glades in the dim columned woods  
Opened and closed their beauties as they came :  
Islets and infant archipelagos  
Thronging their wavy pathway grew in size,



And shrank again behind them : rivers poured  
Their roaring tribute from imperial urns  
Into the main of waters where they rode  
Almost invisible in midmost channel ;  
For wide and wider grew the guarded banks,  
As if the opening avenue must soon  
With all its retinue of silent trees  
End the long triumph of its thousand miles.  
And here at last were towns and heathen fanes  
Glittering with all the glory and the glow  
Of occidental wealth ; and tawny chiefs,  
Hung round with rubies and with emeralds,  
Welcomed them from the shores ; and martial  
    maids  
Of Amazonian stature, breasted round  
With plates of beaten gold, stood on the banks  
And seemed to offer tribute, and entreat  
The strangers' stay. Still on and on they sped  
With all the glory of the Occident  
Unrolling like a map before their eyes ;  
Until, at last, their river voyage o'er,  
They came one sunset within earshot of

The sullen roar of Ocean swinging ever  
His billowy strength against the stolid land.  
All night they listened to the measured beat  
Booming along the dark : and at the dawn,  
Lo, the far banks receding north and south  
Never again to meet ! and the green sea  
With all its millioned multitude of waves  
Tumbling in chainless freedom ! and the sun  
Slow-rising as of old with welcoming smile  
Out of the depths of the familiar sea !

THE muffled boom of ocean far away  
Is in mine ears again : but now no more  
As in blue breakers whitening on the beach  
Hear I the voice of cheerful energy,  
Activity and change : it is the moan  
Of baffled feebleness that flings in vain  
A tangled waste of drenched and drownèd  
    hopes  
In final effort on the rocks of fate.

And sing ye may, ye mariners, who launch

Your gilded galleys in the freshening dawn  
Upon a sunlit sea : to you the winds  
Call joyous from the deep ; to you the plain  
Of ocean is a silver-fretten floor  
Of sapphire luminous with the living gleams  
Of the great crystal sky-dome over all.

And ye with faces brown that, homeward  
bound,

Press where the faded figurehead below  
Looks towards the enlarging hills, and shout  
for joy

When on the far edge of the safe-crossed main  
The old kirk-spire shoots up, the old round  
tower

At the pierhead, and on the concave shore  
Houses and homes in social brotherhood  
With open door waiting your late return  
—Ye, too, may sing in heart, your labours o'er,  
The quiet haven in your weary view,  
And the calm lights of evening overhead  
Steadily shining as the sun goes down.

But wonder not if on despondent lips  
The voice of song has died, and querulous care  
Breaking a silent grief draws nigh to them  
Who on the ocean lost and far from home  
Feel neither morning's flush of airy hopes  
Nor evening's rest resigned—see neither sun  
Nor lunar light nor stellar, wrapt in mist  
And pelting rains that intermingle night  
With dawnless day and unseen sea with land.

O dreary seas, your sullen leaden grey  
Will ever sun enlace with gold again?  
Will ever hope rise more in complete orb  
Of brilliant song, Apollo with a crown  
Of fresh-dug gold luting it o'er your sadness?

O many times in heedless ears shall sound  
The solar melody, in heedless eyes  
The solar blazon be outrolled above  
Your leaden waters ! But to one to whom  
These were the joy which youthful monarchs  
feel

When first they grasp a sceptre, nay, were life,

Were very life throbbing through all the veins  
And arteries as with eternal pulse  
—To Orellana, never, never more !

On him the shadow of the Hand of Death  
Descended darkening, as a falcon's wing  
Falls on the snowy radiance of a dove.  
Oh, how should he escape that closing Hand?  
Would the imperial parchment in his gripe,  
With the vain sanction of its dangling seals,  
Its signatures, its pomp of Latin phrase  
That gave the wealth and width of the Brazils  
From seashore to sierra westward far,  
To Don Francisco Orellana, bribe?  
Would prayer, or tear, or impious sacrifice  
For just a little summer's lease of life  
Such as an insect has, persuade? Would love  
Of wife new-married by vicarious pain  
Avert?

But what were all the wish of life,  
Now hope of life was gone, for that one stain  
Of perjury that blackened all the past?

The stain sent rays of gloom even to the  
realm

Of sunny infancy: and forward far  
It rushed into Eternity, a flood  
Of widening blackness! Orellana groaned  
And hid his face with both his hands: "The  
star!"

He muttered in his agony—"The star!  
Oh, I mistook it for the will of Heaven!"

Beside him where he tossed in fever-pain  
In the dim narrow cabin sat his wife  
With ne'er a word of comfort in her heart.  
His men dotted the deck like images  
Of famine and despair—hating both him  
Who with a lying story lured them forth  
To chase a madman's fancy, and themselves  
Who credited a dreamer. Vainly they  
Had thrust through mist and rain, through  
creek and strait  
And muddy shallow, searching for a channel  
To inland El Dorado:—in despair

Now waited for the end. The rain-streams  
hissed

Along the deck, and all around the ship,  
And on the sea, and all along the sea  
To where the neighbour ships loomed through  
the mist

Like veiled monuments; and at the window  
Of the dim cabin where the leader lay  
Hissed loudly; and in scornful hissings drowned,  
Sank Orellana from the world of men.





## B R I E R S

---

“ There grows a *bonnie* brier buss in oor kailyard.”

—OLD SONG.



I.

I N M E M O R I A M.

“There is one event unto all.”

OUT there in the sunshine, that's gilding  
The garden that seldom is green,  
The workmen are lazily building  
A pillar in praise of the Dean.

Last week they were at a church-steeple,  
And next week it may be a jail :  
—They're a common mechanical people,  
You see, and their labour's for sale.

Two soldiers at them are gazing,  
Schoolboys, and a loafer or two :

Asks one, "What is it they're raising?"

Another, "And what did he do?"

Pale Frank hurries past to the College,

Hollow-eyed, red-nosed, and lean;

The way to get on is get knowledge,

And he's hoping one day to be Dean.



## II.

### THE MASK OF MISERY.

"Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words but they do them not."

THE lattice is open, and into the street

Floats music sad and slow;

To the midnight Bobby it's quite a treat

—Up there there's company, light, and heat,

And the luxury of woe.

Now none will say she cannot play,  
That lady at the keys ;  
And the singer that beside her stands  
With Gounod's music in his hands  
Can melt a soul with ease.

*There is a green hill far away—*

And the passion sinks and swells.  
—Do you think they believe it? that lady gay?  
That silken tenor? . . . Or would you say  
It's a sound and nothing else?

Be this as it may, they dissipate  
The night with wailing psalms ;  
And the rest of the company clap and prate,  
While a waif from the Pleasaunce at the gate  
Sings merrily for alms.

## III.

## FOUND DEAD.

A LITTLE wayward human elf  
Lay dead at Cæsar's feet  
Where sceptred Cæsar lifts himself  
Out of the vulgar street.

A passing workman at the dawn  
Of a December day,  
He found this little doeless fawn,  
This "Home"-reared runaway.

A wild bud by the rude winds blown  
From its untended sod;  
A young life on the altar stone  
Flung to a pagan god.

They bore the slender fragile thing  
From Cæsar's feet of stone.  
And who was she?—By their whispering  
A child of Cæsar's own.

## IV.

## THESE AND THOSE.

UNDER an apple-tree, laden  
With pink promissory-notes,  
Loiter a man and a maiden  
—Each on the other one dotes.

Blue through the apple-boughs o'er them  
It gleams like a sapphire, the sky ;  
Rosy and radiant before them  
Vistas invitingly lie.

Out of their sight and their hearing,  
But only over the wall,  
Two are snarling and sneering  
Who love not each other at all.

What had you said had you seen them  
As I have put them in rhyme ?  
For these are those, and between them  
Is only a measure of time.

## V.

## PARTING AND MEETING.

THEY quarrelled, parted with a frown,  
Took each his separate path,  
And that and many a day went down  
And rose upon their wrath.

And Jim went east and Duncan west,  
And not a word said Jim ;  
And Duncan—well, he would be blest  
Before he'd speak to him.

The tranquil hamlet of their birth  
The brothers left behind ;  
Wider between them grew the Earth  
And keener blew the wind. . . .

In 'Frisco where the cypress waves  
Its melancholy green,  
Are James and Duncan Gordon's graves,  
And but a step between.



## VI.

## THE PLEADER.

It's an edifying sight to see  
His teeth like ivory shine  
As he laughs with a lord familiarly  
Over the walnuts and wine :

Or as from court to court he skips,  
Too busy to look grand,  
With a golden lie between his lips  
And truth half-choked in his hand.

Busy indeed ! And, little with big,  
And one time with another,  
Must many a thought hive under his wig :  
—There's never one of his mother.

Over a tub in the village she bends,  
Red-armed amid the suds,  
While he a titled rogue defends  
In town before my Luds.

## VII.

## DE L I L A H.

“Quod dicit amanti

In vento, et rapidâ scribere oportet aquâ.”

SHE put an arm around his neck, and, looking  
in his eyes,—

“For other love I nothing reck; ’tis yours alone  
I prize.”

She kissed his brow, she kissed his mouth, she  
made his heart rejoice,—

“In all the land from north to south you are  
my only choice.”

—And yet he knew within a week, at most  
within a year,

A like confession she might speak in some one  
else’s ear.

## VIII.

## THE TWO SUNSETS.

FINISHED, on the studio wall

Hangs the painter's masterpiece ;  
Round it crowd the critics all  
Gabbling like a flock of geese.

This is good, now ! That is splendid !  
—The foreshortening on that oak !  
See how well the greys are blended !  
Ah ! but here's the master-stroke !

—So they gabble, heads awry,  
Craning all their necks together,  
Just like geese when in the sky  
There's a change to dirty weather.

. . . . .

SAD at heart the painter pale  
Turns his back upon them all,  
Watching down the long green vale  
Summer's sun in glory fall.

Pass unseen, translucent splendour !  
Change and pass, ye coloured fires !  
Apes to art their homage render  
—Heaven's great pictures Art admires.

They will gabble over paint  
Till the night descending blind them,  
Heedless of the gold that, faint,  
Fades, and fainter yet behind them.

## IX.

## THE PROMENADE.

HE beats his wife, who in the street  
Hangs smilingly upon his arm  
With such a sad, pathetic, sweet,  
And tremulous grace in the deceit  
—None but a devil could do her harm.

The crowds sail on, the coaches roll ;  
And once, as former friends drove by,  
One tearful glance at him she stole :  
Yet this man with the little soul  
—He has a body six foot high.

## X.

## JOAN THAMSON'S MAN.

HE fears his wife, who in the street  
Leads him about from shop to shop ;  
His training is a thing complete,  
He's taught to carry, and look neat,  
And stop wherever she may stop.

To-day I marked him when a shoal  
Of boisterous bachelors cantered by ;  
At them a greyhound glance he stole :  
And this man of the little soul  
—His body's over six foot high.

## XI.

## WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

MARTIAL words to a mournful chant !  
But martial words her patrons want  
Where the bounce is big if the sense be scant  
—Though to her it's nothing at all ;  
It happens to be some jingo rant  
Caught from a music-hall.

A white face hooded in a shawl,  
Upon whose faded tartan fall  
Prelusive hail-drops round and small  
In the blaze of the dram-shop seen :  
—A tapster flings her a coin, and a call  
For “Jock o' Hazeldean.”

Within, across a table bend  
A drunkard and his drunken friend,  
Who with the empty gill-stoup end  
Keeps time with noisy beat  
To the song the girl he should defend,  
His wife, sings in the street.



## XII.

## THE AULD HOOSE AND THE NEW.

CLICK go the balls in the billiard-room,  
The glasses clink at the bar,  
Mine host at the door looks into the gloom  
—Looks up at the evening star.

That star of old has looked too cold  
On a Cæsar's cinctured brow  
To envy the gold whose links enfold  
The breast of a Boniface now !  
And covet not, mine honest host,  
The treasury of heaven :  
'Tis to enrich some beggar's ghost  
Yon gold will yet be given.

And here it comes adown the street,  
Slips into the window blaze  
And sings with tremulous voice and sweet  
A song of eldern days.

*The auld house, the auld house,  
 What tho' the rooms were wee?  
 Kind hearts were dwellin' there  
 And bairnies fu' o' glee!*

*The mavis still doth sweetly sing,  
 The bluebell sweetly blaw,  
 The bonnie Earn's clear-windin' still—  
 But the auld house is awa!*

*The Auld Hoose* to the simple strain  
 Rises in memory clear;  
 He sees the round-stone walls again,  
 In youthful days so dear;  
 A bent old man with silver hair,  
 His father! at the plough—  
 God! what avails the anguished prayer  
 That he were living now?

He looks out into the vocal gloom,  
 But his thoughts are wandering far,  
 While the balls go click in the billiard-room  
 And the glasses clink at the bar.

FROM THE SICILIAN OF  
VICORTAI



## A DEDICATION.

LIKE spray blown lightly from the crested wave

To glitter in the sun,

So from my heart love gave

These airy fancies to the eyes of a  
belovèd one.

But who shall guess

From the blown foam that in the sunbeam  
shines

What secret stores there be

Of unsunn'd sea?

Ah ! how much less

The depths of what I feel from these poor  
broken lines

I dedicate to thee !

## II.

## REFLECTED HEAVEN.

THE mountain-tops above the mist  
Like summer islands lie—  
Now we together both were blest  
If thither we could fly.  
And you, while at  
Your feet I sat,  
Would gaze into the skies ;  
But I would be  
Content to see  
Their glory in your eyes.

## III.

## SUMMER IN WINTER.

WINTER is it? Summer splendour

Never was so fair to see!—

All because a maiden tender

Gave to-day her heart to me.

Heaven a happy lifetime lend her,

Long, and from all evil free ;

For the graces that commend her

Make her life the life of me.

## IV.

## LOVE TEST.

LASSIE wi' the face sae bonnie,  
An' the bricht bewitchin' ee,  
Is there, tell me, is there ony  
Danger I can dare for thee?  
That I lo'e thee thou mayst know it,  
But it's hard for me to bear  
A' my love till I can show it  
By some danger I maun dare !



## V.

## THE VIOLET'S GRAVE.

THE woodland ! And a golden wedge  
Of sunshine slipping through !  
And there, beside a bit of hedge,  
A violet so blue !

So tender was its beauty, and  
So douce and sweet its air,  
I stooped, and yet withheld my hand,—  
Would pluck, and yet would spare.

Now which were best?—for spring will pass  
And vernal beauty fly—  
On maiden's breast or in the grass  
Where would you choose to die ?

## VI.

## FELIX, FELIX TER QUATERQUE !

SHOUT and sing, ye merry voices  
Of the mountain-forest free !  
What, but late, were jarring noises  
Now as music are to me !  
Earth in bridal bloom rejoices,  
Heaven benignly bends to see !  
He, beloved of her his choice is,  
Blest of all the boys is he !  
Blest of all the world of boys is  
He that's telling this to thee !  
Shout and sing, ye merry voices !—  
Fill the forest with your glee !

## VII.

## SUMMER EVE.

IT is the hour when all things rest :  
The sun sits in the bannered West  
And looks along the golden street  
That leads o'er ocean to his feet.

Sea-birds with summer on their wing  
Down the wide West are journeying,  
And one white star serenely high  
Peeps through the purple of the sky.

O sky, and sea, and shore, and air,  
How tranquil are ye now, and fair !  
But twice the joy ye are were ye  
If one that's dead companioned me.

## VIII.

## S E R E N A D E.

AWAKE, beloved ! it is the hour  
When earth is fairyland ;  
The moon looks from her cloudy bower,  
The sea sobs on the sand.  
Our steps shall be by the dreaming sea  
And our thoughts shall wander far  
To the happy clime of a future time  
In a new-created star !

Arise, my fair ! a strange new wind  
Comes kindly down from heaven ;  
Its fingers round my forehead bind  
A chaplet angel-given.  
I'll sing to thee of the dawns to be  
And the buds that yet shall blow  
In the happy clime of a future time  
Which only the angels know !

## IX.

## THE FUGITIVES.

DEAR love, we have left them behind us !

Behind us, and far below !

They will search a month ere they find us

In the hill-wood where we go.

Listen ! . . . that is the voice of the forest,

It is whispering us words of cheer :

Ah, my heart, when my heart was sorest,

Has often been healed up here !

Why do you cling to me, darling,

And bury your face in my breast ?

You may well be at ease where the starling

Has grown a familiar guest.

The forest and the mountain  
And I are old, old friends,  
And the wild birds and the fountain  
And the sky that over them bends ;

And the friends of my youth and my childhood'  
Thou maiden of the sea  
That hidest thy face in the wild wood,—  
How could they be foes to thee ?

Look up, my own heart maiden !  
No foot of man comes here ;  
'Tis tenantless as Eden  
Throughout the tranquil year !—

But I am nearly forgetting  
Old Philip and his wife :  
From sunrise to sunseting  
They lead a simple life.

'Tis sixty years since he brought her  
To share his board and bed ;

And they had a son and a daughter—

But *she* is long since dead.

And the boy became a soldier

And marched to the wars away :

And the old couple grow still older

In the wood here where they stay.

How brightly your eyes are shining,

And but the trace of a tear !

With your cheek on my arm reclining,

Dear heart, you should have no fear.

They sit far up on the mountain

Beside their clean-swept hearth,

Where the river is only a fountain

And heaven is nearer than earth.

The goodwife knits her stocking,

And Philip should trap the game ;

But he's old, so the birds are flocking

And the blue hares are quite tame.

The mother thinks of her daughter  
And her hair that outshone the sun ;  
But Philip dreams of slaughter,  
And of his wayward son.

There is none, you know, to advise her,  
Excepting her prejudiced mate.  
Ah, heaven ! the mother is wiser  
As love is better than hate.

So the mother knits and fondles  
In fancy the flaxen hair,  
While Philip a sabre handles,  
And starts in his sleep in his chair.

How far to their cottage is it?—  
A good hour's climb, I should say :  
Of course, we must pay them a visit,  
And they're sure to ask us to stay.

So now, sweetheart, if you're rested,  
We'll farther up the wood :



Many a night have I nested  
Here in the solitude.

It's grand in the wood in the sunlight  
As the sunlight's falling now,  
But I like it too when the wan light  
Of the moon is on each bough.

Look back ! she is floating yonder—  
I saw her between the trees  
When their fringes were drawn asunder  
By the fingers of the breeze.

How naked and forsaken  
She shrinks through the blue day-sky !  
At night, never fear, she'll awaken  
And lift her horn on high.

Look up through the boles before us,  
And the long clear slanting lines  
Where the light that shimmers o'er us  
Is sifted through the pines !

It's a good hour yet till gloaming,  
And then we've Selenë's light ;  
And it's pleasant this woodland roaming  
In search of a home for the night.

Give me your hand, my darling !  
We're safe in the solitude ;  
In the world beneath us there's snarling—  
There's peace in the mountain wood.

## X.

## THE DREAMER.

I ROAM a homeless spectre  
Among the shows of Time,  
For I have drunk the nectar  
Of the eternal clime.  
Oh, what is all the treasure  
That Time or Earth bestows,  
To one sip of the pleasure  
My soul in dreamland knows?  
With you in dreams I've wandered  
The gates of Eden through,  
And cheerfully have squandered  
Life's morning hours for you.  
Around me my relations  
Came with their prayers and jeers ;

I bore their scorn with patience,  
I heard their love with tears.  
Oh, what is all the treasure  
That Time or Earth bestows,  
To one sip of the pleasure  
My soul in dreamland knows?  
They tried to rouse with glory,  
They sought to win with wine;  
I smiled to hear their story  
As they had smiled at mine.  
To duties next they pointed  
That I had left undone;  
But I, love's pale anointed,  
Would own to only one:  
A duty that will lengthen  
When theirs are past and o'er,  
Eternity shall strengthen,  
And I will value more.  
There's one could tell how truly  
My ritual vows I've kept,  
With what devotion duly  
Both when I waked and slept.

In vain they promised glory,  
In vain they proffered wine ;  
I smiled to hear their story  
As they had smiled at mine.  
Their ease to me is aching,  
They smile when I would weep,  
Their sleep to me is waking,  
Their waking only sleep.

Oh, what is all the treasure that Time or Earth  
bestows,  
To one sip of the pleasure my soul in dream-  
land knows?



S Y L V Æ





## THE GENIUS OF THE GLEN.

*(A Ballad of the Sunless Summer.)*

It was the glen so dear to us,  
And on the eve of May,  
Yet ne'er a leaf was on the buss  
Or blossom on the spray.

The sky aboon was grey and still  
—Oh, something was to blame !  
And immelodious flowed the rill  
That gives the glen its name.

Grey were the dripping craigs wi' fogg,  
The ferns were red and sere,  
Dowie the day, as days that dog  
The wa-gaun o' the year.

And but ae gowan in a nook  
Had daured to ope its ee ;  
And, wae was I ! it seemed to look  
Reproachfully on me.

And mair than wae, amazed was I  
A flower o' gentle fame  
Should lay its woodlan' shyness by  
And bid me bide a blame.

The linties on the scroggy brae,  
They hadna heart to sing ;  
In undertones they seemed to say  
“ Ye've robbed us o' the spring ! ”

And wae and mair bewildered yet  
I waited for their sang :  
Puir things ! I only heard them fret  
That winter days were lang.

The faded firs and larches tall  
On me looked darkly down,

They wagged their heads together all,  
And met me with a frown.

I turned me from the steep glen-side  
To glancing linn and pool :  
The naiad down the water wide  
Fled with a sound of dule !

Oh, doubly dowie noo the glen,  
And drearer yet the sky,  
And sad the winds that noo and then  
Complaining passed me by.

For I was mingled wi' the cause  
That wrought the season wrong,  
Had somehow meddled wi' the laws  
That lead the months along ;

Had stolen the sunshine from the air,  
The greenery from the glen,  
Had killed the querulous wren wi' care,  
And made the merle a wren.

O' whatna man could that be true?

—Surely he'd spare, I cried,

The glen in which he came to woo,

In which he won his bride.

I carved her name upon an oak

Last August, and since then

Although Glen Farg to ither folk,

To me 'tis Annet's glen.

And Scotland in its hundred nooks

Nae brawer glen can show,

Nor yet amang her hundred brooks

A burn sae dear I know.

And wae am I, and sad indeed,

Sae fair a glen should grieve

And wear the weary winter weed

Sae late as summer eve.

—Wi' that the day grew dim as e'en,

A glamour owre me fell,

And weird and foreign grew the scene,  
And far away as well.

And first a thin forwandered wind,  
As of a voice that grieves  
Gaed up the glen, and left behind  
A rustling of red leaves.

And next a hush fell on the glen ;  
Nor move nor breathe could I ;  
The hush sank into deeps, and then  
I heard a long-drawn sigh.

Then, from the shadow of a lirk  
That cleaves the grey glen wall  
A reverend figure from the birk  
Rose like a tower, and tall.

His face was dusky red as leaves  
That burn with autumn fire :  
Such tint the cedar-bough receives  
When summer suns retire.

Brown beechen leaves that once were green  
    Composed his coat of mail,  
And round his long white beard was seen  
    A fringe of lichens pale.

And if the centuries had enlaced  
    His cheek with many a line,  
There was a vigorous freedom graced  
    And made his look divine.

Upon his brow there sat awry  
    A crown of faded fern,  
And troubled was his coal-black eye,  
    And grave his look, and stern !

And full on me he fixed his glance  
    —Oh, but his glance was keen !  
Like shimmer of a flying lance  
    It dazzled baith my een !

“ I am the Genius of the Glen,”  
    He thus the silence brake,

“And thou——! Among the sons of men  
A falser never spake !

“Last August to this glen you brought  
A blithesome maid, and true ;  
And when my fairest bower you sought,  
I welcomed both of you !

“I housed you in my fairest bower  
—True love is all so rare ;  
It was a joy I feel this hour  
To see so kind a pair.

“And all my nymphs and naiads took  
A peep at where you lay,  
Then hastening back to brake and brook,  
Talked of you all the day.

“So glad were they, so pleased was I ;  
And when you vowed to bring  
The maiden with the sunbright eye  
This way again in spring,

“I vowed that spring might come or stay,  
But as for mine and me,  
Our glen and we would not be gay  
Till she should come to see !

“And birds are mute, and flowers have slept,  
And trees delayed to leave ;  
And sadly we our vows have kept  
Till summer’s very eve.

“And here on summer’s eve art thou,  
The falsest among men,  
Who darest with a broken vow  
To enter Annet’s glen !”

His voice was stern, and anger blazed  
In baith his coal-black een :  
“And this,” he cried, with arm upraised,  
“Our welcome would have been !”

A flash—a rush of opening leaves,  
A mist of emerald light,



And green with yellow interweaves  
A vision of delight !

A million myriad leaves and flowers,  
Where flowers and leaves were none ;  
And where but late were sunless bowers,  
New gilded by the sun.

The sunshine on the soft green leaf  
Flowed down from broad blue skies :  
—Oh me ! it was a dear relief  
To rest the weary eyes.

And merle and throstle sat or flew,  
And whistled loud and sang ;  
And more and more their gladness grew,  
Till all the valley rang.

And down the glen the water ran,  
With pleasure plashing cool ;  
And roses blushed, and lilies wan  
Grew pale by every pool.

The flaunting woodbine o'er the rocks  
Held out its honeyed horn ;  
The belted bees flew past in flocks  
And incensed with the morn.

The broom was fringed with golden flame,  
And through the woodland wide  
A wind that wandered without aim  
Grew sad for joy, and sighed.

Dear Lord ! it was a pleasant sight  
To see but in a dream—  
The green leaves, and the holy light,  
And the clear, flowing stream.

Sure Eden glimpses yet are got,  
And Eden memories ours,  
While summer's golden glance is shot  
Through woodbine-birken bowers !

But now the whole air seemed to dance,  
The glen went whirling round,

And falling in a slumbrous trance  
I lay along the ground.

How long in this deep sleep I lay  
I have not to declare,  
But when I woke the sky was grey,  
The birks and larches bare ;

The maniac wind, that takes no care  
Whether 'tis glad or grieves,  
Was scattering in the beamless air  
Handfuls of autumn leaves.

*30th April 1879.*

## THE MEET AT MIDNIGHT.

31ST DECEMBER 1878.

THEY are mustering to-night on the ocean  
Their legions in mighty force,  
Their banners in wild commotion,  
Their trumpets braying hoarse.

The billows are scourged into madness  
By the stroke of their giant wings,  
And the hollow vault that holds the stars  
Booms, and bellows, and rings !

Would you know why all this gathering  
Of winds at the midnight hour?  
—I will tell you anon, but you must know  
First of their mighty power.

They have come from the south, and the east-  
ward,

And the fierce north blasts are there ;  
And shoulder to shoulder with ruffled wings,  
They press till they fill the air !

For miles and for miles of the ocean,  
Shoulder to shoulder they lie,  
And the long strong sweep of their flanking  
wings  
Strikes from sea to sky.

You might trace the track they have come by  
By lighthouses down thrown,  
And towns with steeples and churches  
And the sea with wrecks o'erstrewn.

And their squadroned strength is greater  
Than ever yet shook the earth,  
When she shakes with the mighty anguish  
Of an earthquake at the birth.

But now they are all in motion,  
And with one continuous shout  
They sweep in a hurricane up Strathbraan,  
And blow the Old Year out !

For the burden of sin on the Old Year's back  
As he sways and staggers along,  
Is as big as the huge earth-globe itself,  
And needs a wind so strong.

Blow, winds from the German Ocean,  
This burden from the earth !—  
Sweet rest be yours and the weary world's  
In the hush of the Young Year's birth !

## SIMMER LOST :

A SIGH FOR SANDIE IN NEW ZEALAND.

Hoo sweet were simmer i' the woods,  
 Or doon the burnie clear,  
 —In a' her haunts, in a' her moods,—  
 If, Sandie, you were here.

Then doobly graun the wastlin braes  
 Wad glow at gloamin-tide,  
 An' redder wad the mornin' rays  
 Rin up the plantin-side.

An' bonnier owre the loch wad creep  
 The dimplin' waves sae sma',  
 An' wins less wantonlie wad sweep  
 The young green leaves awa'.

And I should look wi' clearer een  
    About me an' before,  
An' cease to think o' simmers, been  
    To be again no more.

It's simmer yet, an' yet a'most  
    I mourn the simmer gane,  
An' feel as if its joys were lost  
    Lavisht on me mylane.



## A GIFT FOR A BRIDE.

A GIFT for my bride on her birthday !

—But what shall the souvenir be ?

What best of all gifts of the earth may

Remind her of me ?

A ring for her delicate finger,

To pinch it a little all day ?

A song in her heart that will linger

When I am away ?

A chain for her neck, with a locket ?

A book that her mind will engage,

And will easily go in her pocket ?

A bird in a cage ?

A volume of manuscript verses?

A flower in porcelain that blows?

A phial of scent that disperses

The attar of rose?

The frond of a fern, or a feather,

Among her fair tresses to twine?

A sprig, for her breast, of white heather,

Or pale jessamine?

A thimble? a bangle? a bonnet?

A pencil? a portrait of me?

A bracelet with *AEI* upon it?

A crooked bawbee?

Now which of them all shall I send her?

Indeed I might send her them all,

"*With care*," "*Carriage paid*," "*Special tender*,"

—And think it too small.

Suppose I just send her a letter

And sign it in silver "YOUR OWN"?

—Bah ! either I'll manage it better,

Or leave it alone !

That notion is too mediocre :

—Come, Fancy ! there's something amiss !

—I have it ! As I am a smoker,

I'll send her a kiss !

But how to transmit it ! . . . What fairy,

Or seraph, or sylph of the air

Will come in my present quandary

My offering to bear?

I'll cleanse my mustache of tobacco,

And wait for a wind from the south

To take the dear trifle, *per Bacco!*

Direct from my mouth.

Receive it, ye breezes ! And lest ye  
Should lose it, or make a misdeal,  
Take ten or twelve more to attest the  
Devotion I feel !

Your flight is up over yon mountain  
That looks o'er Strathearn to Strathtay,  
Then down by the clear caller fountain ;  
—At Craigie you stay.

And there, to the mirthfullest lady  
That ever was sad in the sun,  
Deliver your trust ; but be ready  
To go when it's done !

—And how will ye know when ye've found  
her ?

—Her gait, and the grace of her glance,  
The beauty that brightens around her,  
Will tell you at once !

She's true, and she's kind, and she's clever,

And pensive, and not very tall

—As high as my heart is, however—

And modest withal.

And so, unannounced, you'll enfold her ;

And, ere from your wings she can slip,

You'll softly pay down, while you hold her,

My tax on her lip.

## THE CAMP ON THE OCHILS.

*"Et propinquâ luce fulsere signa: . . . et Romanis redit animus: . . . et fuit atrox in ipsis portarum angustiis proelium, donec pulsi hostes."*—TACITUS Agricola, xxvi.

THE gold has paled to silver on the height,  
 The gull belated to the lake has flown ;  
 Why sits young Andro in the house to-night  
 While Cæsar hunts in the old camp alone ?

The goodman's cutting clover in the field,  
 Young Phemie o'er the meadow calls the cow :  
 They've all a task but Cæsar—idle chield !  
 Cæsar stands whining on the whinny knowe.

How would his ears go up, his eyes grow clear,  
 The white star on his tail be whisked about,

If only Andro's bonnet should appear  
Above the dike, followed by Andro's shout !

What fun you'd see in the old camp ! What  
bounds  
O'er burrowy mound and boulder, furze and  
heath !  
Andro would beat — Cæsar would watch the  
grounds,  
His pink tongue palpitating o'er his teeth !

Where lingers Andro?—Harvesting the light  
For one red page beside the kitchen flame :  
A different Roman is the spell to-night,  
And Tacitus, not Cæsar, is the name !

The page is open where Agricola's camp  
One daybreak, eighteen centuries ago,  
Sprang to a man from earth-bed cold and damp  
At the wild slogan of the Celtic foe.

The battle's in the gateways, hand to hand ;  
    The sword of Caius rings on Colin's mace ;  
The eagles flash—who can their glance with-  
    stand?

On them ! They yield—the rout becomes a  
    race !

How strange it seems,—the ruined camp with-  
    out,

With peaceful rabbits hopping to and fro ;  
Within, the schoolboy glorying in the rout  
    Of his forefathers there so long ago !



## ADVENTUS VERIS.

SPRING came to-day! and glad were we  
As very children in our glee.  
The sun shone forth with blinding flame,  
And from the west a soft wind came :  
The west ! Nay, sister, rather say  
It blew from boyhood's happy day !  
It brought with it the village old  
Wherein was passed our age of gold,  
And I, a happy-hearted scholar  
With jacket short and broad white collar,  
Frisked with my classmates in the street :  
—Ay me ! how fast the seasons fleet !

Spring came to-day! Our minstrel, mute  
No longer, tuned and tried his flute ;

Puss in the window-corner heard,  
Looked cageward, closed her eyes, and purred ;  
And outside in the open air  
Sparrows shot whirring here and there ;  
And one old ragged meagre rook  
Who, feeling beauish, rashly took  
A sunward voyage, venturing high  
Was buffeted about the sky.

Spring came to-day : she called us out  
With a right cheery country shout.  
We spied her through the blackthorn hedge,  
We saw her in the lakeside sedge,  
We traced her footsteps o'er the hill,  
We chased her down the rippling rill,  
We lost her in a miry lane,  
But in Craiglockhart copse again  
We sought the merry gipsy, chiding,  
And caught her in a hollow hiding.

Spring came to-day : the hawthorn buds,  
The crystal of the Pentland floods,

The sword-like sedges by the lake,  
The red-tipt branches in the brake,  
The thin clean braird of new-year's grass,  
Gowans that open as you pass  
—Their wide-awake fresh fearless eyes  
Glowering surprised at *your* surprise—  
And balmy airs, and skies of blue  
Convince you that the news is true.

We tarried as the sun went down  
On yon high hill besouth the town,  
But fairest view, of all we spied,  
The gardened homes of Morningside.  
The ploughman half a field away  
Rested his horses on the brae,  
Leaned o'er his plough, and on the air  
Came pattle-raspings of the share ;  
Then overglanced the furrows drawn  
By his stout greys and him since dawn,  
Took snuff, clicked with his cheek and tongue,  
Shook the plough-line and *snooved* along !

How sweet it was to see a star  
Born in the heavenly blue afar !  
To mark the slowly waning light,  
The coy approach of veiled Night ;  
To see domestic lights appear  
In villa windows far and near ;  
And hear upon our homeward way  
The children singing at their play,  
Their fresh young voices rising sweet  
Out of the dim suburban street !

Spring came to-day : let's dedicate  
The evening hours to celebrate  
Her joyous advent, sister mine !  
—And first, a glass of generous wine ;  
Then fruit ; and strew the room with flowers  
To dull the footfall of the hours ;  
And you will sing when I am mute,  
And I will choose a tale to suit  
The sweet occasion—*What You Will*  
Or *As You Like It* : Shakespeare still

For every season has a say  
A mood for every man ;  
And so we'll mark SPRING CAME TO-DAY  
As well as ever we can !



## THE LAD OF BENARTY.

*Happy the man wha belongs to nae party,  
But sits in his ain hoose an' looks at Benarty.*

ON the dome of the Lomond I lie  
With my head on a bed of red heather ;  
I see but the clouds and the sky,  
But whether above me, or whether  
Below me, I care not a fly  
Or a feather !

Far down in the town there's a din

Where the blues are abused by the yellows,  
For the yellows are likely to win

And the blues are resentful and jealous ;  
—I laugh in my sleeve and my skin

At the fellows !

And happy the chappie, say I,

Who sails in the tail of no party :  
He laughs as he looks to the sky

With a laugh that is low down and hearty ;  
Or he sits in his house with his eye

On Benarty !

## PINES AND BOULDER.

*“The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.”*

THESE gloomy pines upon the heath,  
That in the sunlight sigh—  
Their secret they will not bequeath,  
Nor will it with them die.

The cold stone they moan around  
Crusted with lichen grey—  
It will not waken from its swound  
Till peals the Judgment-day !

A horror of the midnight dark  
Sleeps in that slumbering stone !  
A shower of blood-drops on their bark  
Has made these pine-trees moan !

## THE TWO FLOWERS.

*"Learn by a mortal longing to ascend  
Towards a higher love."*

THERE'S a cleft high up on the bare hillside  
That looks like a fairy bower ;  
The prospect is fair and far and wide,  
And the fairy is a flower.  
—Why do you nod, little one, up there  
At your watch-tower window so high?—  
I like to feel the caressing air,  
And I love to be near the sky!

There's a mossy cell in a sunken vale  
In the depths of a forest dim  
Where a tiny flower is hiding pale,  
Her eyes with tears o'erswim.  
—Why do you shrink, little one, down there  
In your sunless nunnerie?—  
I fear he will kiss me, the wandering air,  
And the big sky frightens me !



## IN THE KNOCK-WOOD.

COME up and hear the pine-trees sigh !  
Come up within their shade, and lie  
And let the peace which they impart  
Sink soothingly within your heart.

The sigh they send from every leaf  
Breathes resignation and relief ;  
If there's a sadness in the tone,  
You put it there yourself alone !

Each in its own allotted place  
Lifts as it were to Heaven its face,  
The while it stretches out the hand  
Of friendship to the forest band.

Here are no jarrings and no jeers,  
No fevered haste, no vexing fears,  
No envious wish that will not wait,  
No jealous blasphemy of Fate.

There's pathos in the patient air  
With which their annual wrong they bear,  
—Forgetful of the winter's blast  
And glad the summer's come at last.

A placid pensiveness pervades  
The mighty mountain-forest shades,  
—A pensiveness that has no fear,  
No shame, of past or future year.

Come, plunge you in their solitude ;  
The bath will prove a double good  
—A Styx for strength, for sinful pain  
A Lethe to the sleepless brain.

## THE ' LIGHT ON THE HILLSIDE.

“ You see it gleaming far up the height,  
Yon little square patch of warm red light ?  
—It's a far way up, but it's full in my sight,  
And I lodge within its warmth to-night.

Around it the mists of the mountain are curled,  
Above it the Night like a flag is unfurled,  
But it shines like Milton's pendent World  
With the bluster of Chaos against it hurled !

It's only a simple shepherd's cot ;  
But there isn't in all the earth a spot  
Where half so hearty a welcome is got,  
—And *that's* the charm of home, is it not ?

Within, my father is dozing through tire,  
My mother is plying the twinkling wire,  
Between them stands in front of the fire  
A chair that encloses my heart's desire.

Its back ascends an enormous height,  
Its arms stretch outward to left and right,  
And it's clothed from top to bottom quite  
In a clean chintz wrapper of blue and white.

But many wet bushes the winds will toss  
Against my cheek ; and one long moss,  
And braes and brooks, I must climb and cross,  
Ere I cover the miles between it and Kinross.

—Good night, fellow-student ! Good night,  
good night !

A couple of hours will see me all right :  
Think of me then in my chair on the height,  
Think of me then—and you'll envy me quite !”

. . . . .

How strangely his voice at parting thrilled !  
—Well, the night wore by, and the storm was  
    stilled,  
And morning dawned ; but the Fates had  
    willed  
That chair on the mountain should never be  
    filled !



HEIGH-HO ! THE WIND AND  
THE RAIN !

DAY had come without dawning,  
The street was deserted and still,  
At the mill-door the miller stood yawning  
With his back to the hum of the mill.

We drove past the mill with a clatter,  
And out on the wind-swept plain,  
And then down came, whole water,  
In gleaming sheets the rain.

The road struck up the mountains  
Suddenly ere we wist,  
We heard the gushing of fountains  
And the wail of mews in the mist.

At times through the grey fog stealing  
Swept columns of ghostly pines,  
Behind us they seemed to be wheeling  
And forming in squares and lines.

And once far up at a turning  
Where a loch feeds a hundred rills,  
We were ushered without warning  
Into a conclave of hills.

Like hooded monks before us  
They loomed through mist and rain :  
The swirling mists closed o'er us  
And they were lost again.

Splish ! splash ! on the flat of the mountain  
Stumbles our jaded beast ;

The jolts are past all counting,  
And the rain has never ceased !

For dull monotonous mileage  
The hills in a mist have the palm :  
—I wish I were back in the village,  
Or sound asleep where I am.



*Y<sup>E</sup> FATE OF Y<sup>E</sup> BOOK.*

I WROTE a book ; and, what was worse,  
I wrote the whole of it in verse.

Then upspoke an evil elf  
—“ Be a credit to yourself ! ”  
So I printed it, and sent it forth  
West, and east, and south, and north.

Just as it left my hand I woke,  
And the elfin spell that bound me broke ;

And I wished as I saw it o'erfly the land  
That I had it back again in my hand ;  
But the elf laughed loud with malicious glee  
—"It may not be, and it may not be !  
The cage is empty, the bird is free !" —  
And his mocking came back on the winds to  
me.

Then came forth the critic men  
With sharp nose and sharper pen ;  
They flung their long fingers into the sky  
And caught the book as it fluttered by ;  
And it shook like the wings of a captured bird,  
And then, like a dead thing, hung ; nor stirred  
As they bore it off with a strange dark smile.  
But *my* heart was beating fast all the while.

From the free fresh air to a sunless gloom  
They hurried it into a secret room :  
The door swung back with a boding boom,  
"And here," they said, "we will write your  
doom."



They pierced and probed it with their pens,  
Examined it with a powerful lens,  
And up and down they viewed and reviewed,  
Till the good was bad and the bad was good,  
Till white was black, and B was A ;  
—But they used my book in a frightful way ;  
For its wings they broke and its back they  
bent,  
And rumbled its feathers to their hearts' content.

They then sat down at two long tables,  
Dipt into ink, and wrote out labels ;  
The while, most piteous to be seen,  
My book lay ruined and wrecked between,  
And meekly bore the dissecting glances  
That stung my heart like a shower of lances.

At last one rose at the right-hand table  
And read aloud from the written label—  
“ Though he may not have an eagle's pinion,  
Yet the upper air is his dominion.”

"And so say I, and I've written it so,"  
Said Number Two; "he has wings of snow;  
My judgment is that a swan is he."

"A swan!" from the left hissed Number Three,  
"A swan!—I've a different tale to tell:  
He's a gosling; I know the bird right well!"

Said a Fourth, with a head like a downy owl,  
"It's a very ordinary barn-door fowl:  
A useful creature, no doubt, in its place;  
But a cackler! DIXI—that is, it's the case!"

"I agree so far with Number Four,"  
Said Number Five, "as the barn-door:  
But I made an inspection nice and narrow  
And I pledge my ears the bird's a sparrow!  
—And where's the critic will gainsay  
That pledge of mine goes a good long way?"

Out to the centre stalked Number Six:  
"Your various verdicts I must mix;

He's a bird has caught the various tone  
Of other birds, but has none of his own.  
It's a great pity, too, for he imitates well ;  
But all that he has he got outside his shell  
—You know what I mean—he belongs to the  
breed

That pick up their song as they pick up their  
seed.

—I may add in your ear, but don't let it be  
known,

He has plagiarised from a bird of my own !”

“Yah ! yah !” they all yelled, “it's a very good  
lark

That bird of your own : you were best keep it  
dark !”

Uprose Number Seven. He, staggering, rose ;  
And I will not do more than refer to his nose :  
“My masters”—he spoke rather thick—“are  
you blind ?

I've examined him—*hic* !—and what do I find ?

—He has wings that will soar with the best  
we have had ;

But I hate him for all : at his best he is bad !”

Upspoke Number Eight, while he tore what he  
wrote,—

“ I think him a bird of original note,  
But I cannot be sure ; so let's damn him as  
dunce ;

He ought to come out more decided at once.  
If he isn't a dunce I'm a Dutchman ? So be  
it !

If he is—you will own I'm sagacious to see it !”

Scarce two agreed, till they fell on a plan  
Which seemed to please them every man—  
At least the hubbub ceased : they took  
And hung their verdicts round my book  
Like flags of all nations on a wreck,  
Or labels on a phial's neck  
Which each describes the draught to be  
Sherry, laudanum, cold beef-tea.

They dragged it then to the door of their den  
And gave it to the air again.

And away like a guilty thing it flew,  
That thinks it a crime to live, to you ;  
And you took off the labels and stroked its  
wing,

And my poor book looked like another thing.  
And now it was plain they all had erred  
In naming it that and the other bird,  
For it grew in the keep of those I love  
A homely plain domestic dove.

## THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST.

Now, while above heaven's windows dim and  
darken,

And shadows shoot and grow,  
And the wild peaks of rocky Thelemarken  
Blacken the evening glow,—

My thoughts come back from roaming o'er far  
places,

Like sea-birds to their isle ;  
And here in Norway bonnie Scottish faces  
Look through the gloom, and smile.

I know them all: it is a birthday meeting,  
And she, the birthday Queen,  
Looks round as she receives each kindly greet-  
ing  
For one, who is not seen.

There's mirth, and music, and the chink of  
glasses,

Laughter, and lights, and flowers ;

—And so they pelt with roses, as he passes,

Time, and his train of hours.

The lights are out at last, the guests departed,

Yet, lingering near the gate,

There's one, I know, is listening gentle-hearted,

Although the night be late.

She feels almost a lover's kind caresses,

Hears his approaching feet :

—'Tis but the night wind in her wavy tresses,

Or blowing down the street.

Retire, sweet lass ! in vain you look and hearken

For steps that are not near ;

His path is through the wilds of Thelemarken,

Whose voice you think you hear.

The vision fades—fade all the much-loved  
faces,

Fade Perth, Kinnoull, and Tay;  
And unfamiliar outlines fill their places  
And gloom athwart my way.

I hear but in the wood the torrent calling  
In tones that come and go,  
I feel but from the fells a silence falling  
Into the vand below.

And now above heaven's windows fairly  
darken,

And earth is black and drear:  
—And what do I afar in Thelemarken  
From all my heart holds dear?



## WORKING AND IDLING.

WHILE some attempt the task on stirks,  
 And some on mules or asses,  
 The man, that best could do it, shirks  
 The gallop up Parnassus.

His Pegasus unsaddled feeds  
 Beside him in a hollow,  
 Close by the rocky path that leads  
 Up to thy heights, Apollo !

And idling in the shade he lurks,  
 While they tug at their bridles ;  
 They well may call their efforts WORKS ;  
 And what are his but IDYLS ?

## BLOOMTIME : A SONG.

My life is in its bloomtime,  
And faded sisters say—  
“We’ve all our summer sometime,  
She need not look so gay.”

But oh ! the wild young fellows,  
They compliment one so !  
And then, to have *them* jealous  
—It’s more than praise, you know !

## A DITHYRAMB.

## I.

LIFT up your voices in fraternal chorus,  
 All ye who share  
 The joyous spirit of the poet,  
 Wheresoe'er  
 In the four corners of the earth ye dwell!  
 —Lift up your voices! Tell  
 Its owners earth is fair!  
 Sing! Shout aloud, and show it!  
 Sing! for the earth is fair!  
 The same blue heaven is bending o'er us,  
 The same green earth extends before us,  
 And heaven is kind and earth is fair  
 —But mankind do not know it!  
 Lift up your voices

Till the world rejoices  
And knows that earth is fair !

## II.

What though we stand in sundered lands  
And sing in several voices?  
The brotherhood has many bands,  
But with one heart rejoices.

## III.

From the same Father-God we came,  
To the same Father-God we go ;  
Our hopes above are all the same,  
—The same our griefs below,  
Our sadness !

## IV.

Sing ! till the night of sorrow  
Is frightened from the land !  
Give into every hand  
The torch of gladness !

—Gladness is a flame  
Increasing if you lend or if you borrow—  
And cry aloud ! proclaim  
At midnight everywhere  
*Good morrow ! and good morrow !*  
Till timorous souls leap from their hidings  
And know that earth is fair !—  
Lift up your voices  
Till the world rejoices !  
Sing ! till the surging air  
Beats on the battlements of heaven the tidings  
That man rejoices for the earth is fair !

## COMPOSING A SONNET.

## I.

COMPOSING a sonnet

'S like kindling a fire :

Heap largely upon it

—The spark will expire !

## II.

Your very best " chance " is

To coax it with rhyme,

Then try it with fancies

—A touch at a time.

## III.

Now lay the lines lightly,

Keep blowing between,

And soon it will brightly

Seize all the fourteen !

## D A V I D.

HE sits above the mists of Time,  
Above the poet throng ;  
He sits on morning heights sublime  
The king of choral song.

All lesser bards on lower heights  
Fall at his feet their lyres,  
Unknown to them his high delights  
—Unfelt his far desires !

They sing of mortal grief and mirth  
In measures sweet to hear :  
His song ambitious spurning earth  
Makes for Jehovah's ear !

He soars unmated and alone  
    Into eternal day,  
The angel-host around the throne  
    Clear for his wing a way !

The Sons of Morning left behind  
    Cease after him to sing,  
Not theirs that fervour of the mind  
    That fury of the wing !

The burning offering of his praise  
    To heaven himself bears he,  
And with impetuous ardour lays  
    Even on Jehovah's knee !

No seraph's fear his soul can tame,  
    Nor cherub overawed ;  
To him with first and foremost claim  
    Jehovah is a God !



The universe through all its bounds  
Is but a means of praise,  
An orchestra of many sounds  
Concerting with his lays !

Hark, how to his conducting rod  
He calls creation's train  
To hymn the praises of *his* God,  
And swell *his* choral strain !

## PSALM CXLVIII.

PRAISE we the Lord ! Begin, ye matchless  
creatures,

The first-born of His might,  
Circling His glory till your young-God features  
Absorb the eternal Light !

Take up the song, ye Seraphim ! Prolong,  
Ye Cherubim, the pæan !

Drown with His praise, ye meaner angel-  
throng,

The echoing Empyrean !

Praise Him, thou vast of space, that, like an  
ocean,

The eternal heavens between  
And the mysterious maze of starry motion,  
Stretchest afar serene !

Praise Him, ye Powers, that occupy with  
light

Creation's outer porches,  
Fronting the chaos of primeval Night  
With the eternal torches !

Praise Him, thou Sun, that from the flames of  
Morning

Upleapest crowned with light !

Praise Him, thou Moon, retiring and returning  
To shepherdess the night !

Praise Him, ye wanderers of the Milky  
Way !

Ye whispering Constellations !

Ye Comets ! and ye Meteor Stars that stray  
To unknown destinations !

Awake, thou Earth ! and wake thy slumbering  
legions,

And shout aloud, and show  
The challenge of the Everlasting Regions  
Is answered from below !

Praise Him, ye Winds, that sweep the deep  
sublime !

Ye lower Seas and Surges !  
Praise Him, ye Thunders of the torrid clime !  
— Praise Him, ye Polar Scourges !

Praise Him, ye Clouds, ye stately sailing Foun-  
tains !

Ye Cataracts and ye Rills !  
Ye floating Icebergs and ye burning Moun-  
tains !

Ye Deserts and ye Hills !  
Praise Him, ye Earthquakes, from your secret  
mines !

Ye rushing Avalanches !  
Praise Him, ye congregated Palms, ye Pines !  
— Forests with all your branches !

Praise Him, ye Camels and ye Flocks domestic,  
That whiten the green plain !

Praise Him, thou Terror of the Woods, majestic  
With turbulence of mane !

Praise Him, ye Herds upon a thousand  
hills !

Ye Colts, without a rider,  
That drink the freedom of the desert rills,  
Praise Him, the All-provider !

Praise Him, thou Eagle, from thy pinions fling-  
ing

A twilight o'er the sea !

Praise Him, ye Doves ! Praise Him, ye Swal-  
lows, winging

O'er isles and oceans free !

Praise Him, ye Sons of Eve, of all estates,  
Kindreds, and tongues, and nations !

Praise Him, ye Kings, ye sceptred Potentates !  
Ye Priests, with heart oblations !

Praise Him on chord, and reed, and with your  
voices,

All peoples, maids, and men !

Praise Him together, while the heaven rejoices

Answering the earth again !

Praise *Him* alone, for He alone is great

Beyond all mark and measure ;

And we are but His handiwork, who wait

Well pleased upon His pleasure !

## OUR MARY: HER FATE.

This was Mary twenty years ago—

Mary then was four from twenty,

Mary then was gimp and genty,

Mary then had beaux a-plenty,

Rosy cheeks and brow of snow;

Like a fairy

Was our Mary

Twenty years ago.

This was Mary nineteen years ago—

Mary then was meek and modest,

Neatly ankled, shapely bodiced,

By the village poets goddessed,

Classed with Dame Demeter's Oe;  
Like an airy  
Sylph was Mary  
Nineteen years ago.

This was Mary eighteen years ago—  
Mary properly deported,  
Chastely with her sisters sported,  
Would not kiss though she was courted,  
Coaxed by many a downy beau ;  
Wise and wary  
Was our Mary  
Eighteen years ago.

This was Mary seventeen years ago—  
When the lads their longing uttered  
Nothing in her bosom fluttered,  
And she neither stayed nor stuttered  
When she simply said them *No!*  
—Feeling *nary*  
Had our Mary  
Seventeen years ago !

This was Mary sixteen years ago—

When the men their custom carried  
Off to other marts, and married,  
Though it tested those that tarried,  
Mary her *ain gate* would go;  
Veer nor vary  
Would our Mary  
Sixteen years ago.

This was Mary fifteen years ago—

It was at a Christmas party  
That the spinsters at *écarté*  
Leapt up, startled by a hearty  
Smack beneath the misletoe;  
“Did he?—dare he?”  
“*Yes!*” said Mary  
Fifteen years ago!



## RETURN TO EDINBURGH AFTER THE HOLIDAYS.

An' noo, fareweel to hills an' braes,  
 To wuds an' watters broon !  
 We've pairtit wi' the holidays  
 —They're aff! they're fairly flown !  
 An' we, wi' torn an' suddled claes,  
 An' tired fra cuit to croon,  
 Wi' scartit hauns an' blistered taes,  
 Are hirplin' back to toon'!

Like laddies, ill for an excuse  
 For havin' played *the tru'n*,  
 We're comin' in a kind o' daze,  
 An' dummies every loon !  
 The ne'er a lauch hae we to raise  
 To hud oor hearts aboon ;  
 —E'enoo we'd raither dee nor praise  
 Oor ain pedantic Toon !

## THE WEETS O' BAIGLIE.

HERE in the dinsome city pent  
I think upon the days I spent,  
The peacefu' days o' deep content  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna that the sun shone through  
Sky-deeps o' saft divinest blue,  
It wasna for the famous view  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna that the hills were green,  
The wuns an' waters clear an' clean  
—Baith bath an' balm to lungs and een  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna that the fare was guid,  
A hamely healthfu' change o' fuid,  
A benefit to brain an' bluid,  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

—An' there was ham, an' hare, an' veal,  
Paitricks an' parritch, milk an' kail,  
An' buttered scones o' barley-meal  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

An' links o' puddins, black to see,  
An' yowe-milk kebbuck, sweet to pree,  
An' bickerfu's o' barley-bree  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna that the folk were kind,  
Baith laird an' tenant, herd an' hind,  
An' no' a cratur ill-designed  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

—The lasses bonnie, blithe, an' clean,  
Douce i' the mornin, daft at e'en,  
An' saxty soupple as saxteen  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

The grannie's een as gleg as fowre,  
The hauflin wi' his stirk-like glowre,  
The fairmer lauchin' oot a' owre  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna for the social noise  
O' stack-yaird jinks an' fireside joys  
An' rantin' wanton plays an' ploys  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna for the hairvest wark,  
The music o' the mornin' lark,  
An' *leadin'* till the gloamin' dark  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna juist the want o' care,  
The change o' jacket, change o' air,  
An' wastlin' wuns amang your hair  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

It wasna ane—it was them a'  
Upgaithered in a kind o' ba'  
That gars me noo the days reca'  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

Toon's bairns an' bodies ! I could greet  
To think you sin, an' never see't  
—A Paradise itsel' complete  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

Oh, gie the student his degree,  
The advocat' his hansel fee,  
But keep the joys that are for me  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie !

Come roon' again, ye simmer suns !  
An' burn wi' fragrant flame the whuns  
That nod sae sweetly to the wuns  
Up on the Weets o' Baiglie.

An' set me on the hilly road  
That leads to Uncle Rab's abode,  
And I will praise the Lord my God  
Up on the Heights o' Baiglie.

## SONNETS





## A P R I L.

YONDER comes April, on her lip a smile  
And in her eye a tear ! She has the look  
Of one whose face is as an open book  
Yet thinks her harmless secret safe the while.  
Her half-aversion is a childish wile  
To win a welcome from you ; in the nook  
Of the sweet eye a tear has just forsook  
Lurks a blue ring that would a saint beguile !  
—How shall we welcome her? Why, as a  
child  
Returning from a ramble, half afraid  
Her absence may have vexed her mother mild,  
While through the pathless woods alone she  
strayed ;  
And waiting till her father once has smiled  
And spread his arms and called his little  
maid.

## N I G H T.

NIGHT lifts her shadowy arms above the earth,  
 And breathes a benediction o'er the town ;  
 And eyes are closed, and aching heads go  
     down,  
 And silence sits by the forsaken hearth.  
 And now in dreams to pale neglected Worth  
     Come recognition and a cool green crown,  
 And these have friends for every 'waking  
     frown  
 And those for every misery now have mirth.  
 O blessèd sleep ! that like a curtain nightly  
     Drops on this tragi-comedy of man.  
 And blessèd, too, ye heaven-sent dreams, that  
     rightly  
     Transform the piece to the original plan.  
 But best the buskined close—however lightly  
     Hope slipped the sock on when the play began !

## A BACK-LYING FARM.\*

## I.

[A back-lying farm but lately taken in ;  
     Forlorn hill-slopes and grey, without a tree ;  
     And at their base a waste of stony lea  
 Through which there creeps, too small to make  
         a din,  
 Even where it slides over a rocky linn,  
     A stream, unvisited of bird or bee,  
     Its flowerless banks a bare sad sight to see.  
 All round, with ceaseless plaint, though spent  
         and thin,  
     Like a lost child far-wandered from its home,  
     A querulous wind all day doth coldly roam.  
 Yet here, with sweet calm face, tending a cow,  
     Upon a rock a girl bareheaded sat  
 Singing unheard, while with unlifted brow  
     She twined the long wan grasses in her hat.]

\* The first part of this sonnet, which has already appeared in the author's earlier volume of poems, is here reproduced as an introduction to its second part.

## II.

So sat the maiden : to the outward eye

The flower-like genius of a flowerless waste,

Dropped from the hand of Providence in haste

And left neglected here to wane and die.

—And yet, who knows what youthful fancies,  
ay,

What heavenly visitants descending graced

That lonely life, and with bright dreams displaced

The cloudy terrors of the natural sky?

*Heaven lies about us in our infancy,*

And heaven is not a thing of sight or sense ;

Here on this desolate flower-forsaken lea

It opens to the eyes of innocence :

There is an Eden for us all, till we

Let in a devil who straightway drives us  
thence.

"THY WILL BE DONE."

*A Painting by Sir Noel Paton.*

—o—

I.—THE PAINTING.

"No earthly beauty shines in him,  
To draw the carnal eye."

'Twas in the painter's choice: he might have  
framed

A figure more commanding, and a face  
Earthlier fairer and of finer grace,  
And none that loves the Saviour would have  
blamed.

But wiser he: so should a form that aimed  
At drawing all men to him take a place  
No ways superior to the common race,  
In proof he was not of their state ashamed.  
And so—no hero, cased as if in mail  
With adventitious halo of romance;

No strong-built athlete, never known to ail,  
Proud of his strength, defiant in his glance ;  
But looking as if liable to fail,  
With nothing to commend him or enhance.

## II.—TO THE PAINTER.

Creator of The Christ ! when first I stood  
Before thy handiwork, and overawed  
Beheld the mystery of the Son of God  
Sinless yet suffering in the midnight wood,  
Suffering, and yet to suffering quite subdued,  
How could I think of thee ? how could I  
laud  
The power that pained me so ? or how  
applaud  
In presence of that brow with blood bedewed ?  
  
And yet I owe a dearer debt to thee  
Than I have paid to any : there will rise  
Within my memory Paul ; yet even he,  
The great Apostle, failed to *realise*

As thou hast done, for thou hast made me see  
The Christ in Scotland with my actual eyes !

Great Painter ! unto thee the awful dower  
Of genius has been given to dare and do,—  
To image Deity in pain, pursue  
The image into act, hour after hour,  
And bid it live ! I tremble for the power,  
God-lent and (surely for great ends) to few,  
That thus creates the agony anew  
Which God hid in Gethsemanë's dark bower !

—For they will come, the idle and the rude,  
And these will praise thy skill, and those  
will blame ;  
And some, indulgent of a prying mood,  
Will stand and stare, departing as they  
came ;  
And thou wilt seem, thy work misunderstood,  
In these to put the Lord to open shame !

## TENANTLESS.

A LEVEL waste, where sheep are starving drear,  
 And lapwings breed, and sapless windle-  
 straws,

Weakly submissive to the gusty flaws,  
 For ever round the waste forlornly veer,—  
 In midst whereof, most desolate, appear

Four grey walls round an empty house : you  
 pause

As you pass by, and ask what fool he was  
 That built, and brought his household darlings,  
*here ?*

No pathway through the waste leads to the door  
 That fronts the snow-cold hills ; the lake  
 between,

When, as to-day, a north wind's blowing keen,  
 Sends to the very doorstep, cold and hoar,

Patches of flying foam :—a dreary scene !  
 Thank heaven ! to be lived in by child no  
 more !



## ON GRANTON PIER.

WELL, this is what I saw on Granton pier :

In front, the Firth !—"Oh, that is nothing  
new !"

Ay, but you never saw a bonnier blue  
Than its glad waters wore ; the day was clear,  
And—you may laugh—to me they seemed to  
rear

Their waves in actual joy ! Now, *this* is true—

One of the waves took wings, became a mew,  
And sunward rose upon a new career !

Across the Firth I saw the coast of Fife

With here a cliff and there a nestling town ;  
And here and there the hillsides showed the  
strife

Of April green contesting winter brown ;  
And eastward far the horizon's edge was rife

With clean white sails that rose and sank  
adown.

## ON LOMOND HILL.

THE top at last ! . . . All hail, celestial blue !  
     Mother of Freedom, where the winds are nurst  
     And the clouds fly, and sunbeams through  
         them burst,  
 Gilding this old earth till it shines anew !  
 From thy broad bosom also drops the dew  
     As duly on the grass as at the first  
     Ere storms were known, and the green earth  
         was curst,  
 And Man from Nature within walls withdrew.  
 —Yonder, far o'er the Firth, what smoky blot  
     Stains the pure ether? Ah! I know it: there  
 The Town-Witch, crooning o'er her seething-  
         pot,  
     Compounds and brews for man infernal fare!  
 Thee and thy stews, black Witch! from this  
         high spot  
 I solemnly for one whole week forswear !

## TWO SONNETS IN DEFENCE OF SONG.

## I. MORNING.

LOOSE beechen leaves above me ; over which,  
     The cupola of heaven—so still and bright,  
 With the sun dreaming in a far high niche,  
     You think it never can again be night.  
 Nature at rest. The only sounds that reach  
     The listening ear are Labour's, and are  
         light—  
 Rustlings among the oats, the reaper's speech,  
     And the mill-hum of a small town in sight.  
 Afield and in the factory they work,  
     Those at the loom, and these among the  
         corn ;  
 While I, the only idler, seem to shirk  
     The duty laid on every one that's born,  
 And, lapt in leaves, among the beeches lurk,  
     A spy upon my fellows all the morn.

## II. EVENING.

But evening comes : the sounds of Labour  
cease,

And weary workers from their toil return ;  
Domestic lights in cottage windows burn,  
And sundered families unite in peace.

Now what shall smooth with gentle hand the  
crease

Of furrowed brow and ruffled heart outworn,  
Strengthen for the recurring toils of morn,  
And wrap the spirit in the robes of peace?

—Song ! which the poet, idling, as ye said,  
Gathered fresh-fallen from the morning skies.  
Song ! which he wove, and dipped in rainbow  
dyes

When ye cried *Out upon him, Lazyhead !*

Song ! that both feeds and clothes, and far  
outvies

Your factory fabrics and your oaten bread !

## BERRY-HILL.

WE stand upon the Ochils in the air  
 Of a September eve ; great fleecy clouds,  
 Like sheep new - washen, circle earth in  
     crowds,  
 But all the cupola is blue and bare.  
 Here, on the right, *our* Lomond towers ; and  
     there,  
 Far to the west, from a pale smoke that  
     shrouds  
 Its base, Ben Lomond ; and the heaven is  
     bowed  
 Serenely o'er us, resting on the pair.—  
 It is a dutiful delight to flee  
     At times the sorcery of the sordid town,  
 To shake the mind from all vexations free,  
     To know on hill-tops Heaven without  
     frown,  
 And feel like children looking up to see  
     Their parents at a window smiling down !

## A HUMOUR OF THE LINKS.

HE drops in dapper dress upon the ground,—  
 White cuffs, and sleeve-links glancing in the  
 sun,  
 —*A demd fine morning!*—this at half-past  
 one,—

And with three caddies enters on a round.  
 He hits the turf; the ball with oblique bound  
 Flees to the onlookers, who duck and run,  
 And running fall, and falling yell *What fun!*  
 While he calls *Fore!*—and wonders when 'tis  
 found.

Six balls he loses, breaks three clubs, a cleek,  
 And, putting, makes an unexpected drive  
 Which lames a boy and cuts a golfer's cheek,  
 And so ends round the first at half-past five—  
 Seven holes in ninety strokes!—I would not  
 seek

To wrong a living man : the man's alive !

## LOCHLEVEN IN NOVEMBER.

MORNING succeeded morning o'er the Lake

All through the spring, and never once a  
pair

Came quite the same, and yet the Lake was  
fair

And kept the lengthening charm without a  
break.

And surely now (thought I) no power will take

Her beauty from the Naiad ; none will dare

To give the honour to the earth or air,

But all will praise it for her own dear sake.

—Well, one November morning, dazed and  
deaved

With the dull round of the professional  
wheel,

I left the city, and stole unperceived

Upon my Naiad ere the morning meal:

She looked up hastily, surprised and grieved,

Like a proud beauty caught in *deshabille* !

## THE LAWN-ADONIS.

LAWN-TENNIS and the Ladies—give him these :

Misses, with rosebud mouths, and creamy  
cheeks

Spread thinly with a smile that lasts for  
weeks :

And leave the silken Sybarite to his ease.

No other paradise so well could please,

No other paradise the spaniel seeks ;

That smirk of well-fed satisfaction speaks

A life content with what it sucks and sees.

—You sneer,\* Major ! The sneer upon your  
lip'll

Only bring pouts, my gallant god of war !

What ! to his ruby mouth deny the nipple,

And smirch his pearls with porter and cigar,

To whom the smell of small beer's a strong  
tipple

And Polson's paste a food too solid far ?



"*Nec vixit male, qui natus moriensque fefellit.*"

—HORACE, *Epist.* xvii.

A GREAT man dies, or whom the world calls  
great

—And, I've observed, the world will scarce  
allow

One leaf of laurel to your living brow  
Though it grows lavish when you lie in state :  
This for your comfort,—well, he's dead ! and,  
straight,

A kite sits on the shroud ; but whence or how  
The carrion came you cannot guess ; and now  
It claims with yellow beak and claw its bait.  
Faugh ! 'Tis enough to make the dead upstart,

To be so near a living grave, and smell it !  
Happy the man who takes the final dart  
And drops among the grass with none to  
tell it,

Who quietly through life has done his part,  
And, to quote Horace, *moriens fefellit* !

## OLD AGE—THE WRESTLER.

SEEMS but as yesterday that I was young,  
Inhaled the fever of the war of life,  
Made eager preparations for the strife,  
And with the joy of a strong gymnast flung  
My soul into the contest : swayed and swung  
This way and that I reeled ; yet joys were  
rife,—  
Home, and the smile of friends, the love of  
wife,  
And Hopes that flew above my head and sung.  
But, as I wrestled, woe, alas ! my pride  
Of youthful strength received a fall from One  
Who came upon me with a hasty stride  
And threw me heavily : broken, undone,  
I rose and to a corner limped aside,  
And lo, far down the west had sunk my sun !

## WINTER'S PALE MARTYR.

HERE, in the social city, by the hearth,  
 This winter midnight, in an easy-chair,  
 While the flames bicker on the bars, and  
     flare,

And a wild east wind blowing up the Firth  
 Shouts down the chimney in its boisterous  
     mirth,

*Put on your hat and face me if you dare—*

I think me of a hillside lone and bare  
 Far up among the Ochil Hills of Perth.  
 How piteously it waited for the spring  
     With a cold snow-drop sickening in its hand!  
 How patiently it waited for the wing,  
     That never came, of summer in the land!  
 And now it stands in snow-shirt shivering,  
     Winter's pale martyr, meekly at command!

“A BARBARY HEN.”

*See SHAKESPEARE'S As You Like It.*

WHITHER have fled his gamesomeness and glee,  
 His rosy gills, his laughter, and his jinks,  
 The sparkle of his eyes between the winks,  
 And all the merriment we used to see?

There is not now a duller man than he:

At festive times he sits alone and thinks,  
 Drains glass on glass, and still the more he  
 drinks

The less inclined to smile he seems to be.  
 And now, what power in what fell hour did  
 snatch

The mirth we may not hope to see again?

—They say it went for money in a match

That gave him with the gold *a Barbary Hen!*

—Proves the old proverb, Tom! the maddest  
 bach-

Elors make still the saddest married men!

## NORWEGIAN SONNETS

*To Norroway, to Norroway,  
To Norroway owe the faem!*

—OLD BALLAD.



I.

BALDER BACK !

FACING the North, in the grey sea he stands.

The solar orb comes northward, sliding slow,

And—empties on him its solstitial glow !

Blinks up at last with tear-bewildered glands

The puzzled jotun : \* from his rough red hands

Slip the huge balls of hard compacted snow

That in his wrath enraged he meant to throw,

And where they melt, behold ! a brace of vands. †

Meanwhile the blinding tears run down his  
cheeks,

Like torrents swollen with sudden summer  
rain ;

In vain deep-knuckling in his eyes he seeks

To clear his sight—the cataracts burst amain ;

Till, at the last, he gets a peep, and speaks

—*It's you, Balder ! So you've got back again !*

\* Giant.

† Lakes.

## II.

## UP THE SKAGER RACK.

It was the point of dawn ; and in the bow  
I stood alone, facing the grey north-east.  
Far on the left, like a huge brown sea-beast  
That had been chased and was o'ertaken now,  
Surprised asleep, lay Norway. From the prow  
A hissing of salt spray that still increased  
Rose plainly audible—for the gale had ceased  
And the keel cut the sea-plain like a plough.  
And so with only a ripple on the sea,  
And ne'er a storm-cloud o'er us muttering  
black,  
We voyaged with an easy course and free  
And—disappointing, now on looking back ;  
For the old sagas make the surges flee  
Like riderless horses up the Skager Rack.



## III.

## WELCOME !

WAS it the filial instinct of a child  
 Yearning to visit the ancestral home  
 That drove me o'er the furrows and the foam  
 To Norway northward of the ocean wild ?  
 Meseemed at least from fell on fell up-piled  
 Streamed voices—*Now at last, though late,*  
*ye come ;*

*Here is your parent land, no longer roam :*  
 And the scenes grew familiar all, and smiled.  
 But who was he, this worshipper of Thor ?  
 Or, likelier, Odin would the genius suit  
 Of a bold-cruising Viking ancestor—

Some scale-mailed Eric, or chain-shirted  
 Knut !  
 —Vainly I questioned welcoming breeze and  
 torr,\*  
 The winds were silent now, the mountains  
 mute !

\* Hill.

## IV.

## THAT SPEAR.

WE parted with the *Times* at Guldsmo'n,  
Yet two days longer up the dale the hum  
Of European politics would come—  
But sunk, and sinking, to an undertone.  
At last we entered a deep dell o'ergrown  
With ancient pines of lofty stature—some  
An hundred feet—and Europe's voice was  
dumb,  
And we now fairly found ourselves alone.  
Silence, and gloom, and isolation drear  
Produced a feeling, hard to understand,  
Which grew at last a dim-embodied fear  
As of a Spirit, gloomy, silent, grand,  
That rose from out the wood, and drew a-near,  
Grasping a pine-spear in his rebel hand !

## V.

## MILTON IN NORWAY.

THE feeling passed, the Spirit passed away  
—The silence and the isolation drear,  
As broke in fitful bursts on Fancy's ear  
A gravely measured yet melodious lay.  
Wider the sweep, and more complete the sway,  
And longer, deeper, louder, and more clear,  
Until I cried—*Milton is monarch here,*  
*Whatever Oscar and his subjects say!*  
—How had the Master slung into his song  
The pride of Norway, with an arm as free  
As fierce Alcides' when he hurled along .  
The ether from Mount Cæta to the sea,  
Nerved with the strength of that Thessalian  
wrong,  
The groaning trunk of many an upturn tree !

## VI.

## THE SCENERY—GO AND SEE IT!

AND speak ye may of grandeur and of gloom  
And all the dread magnificence that lies  
Where through the dale the foam-fleckt  
torrent flies,  
Or gorgeous sunsets o'er the mountains bloom.  
But who shall in the sonnet's scanty room  
Set the majestic magnitude, the size,  
The mighty mountains and the widening  
skies  
Up on Norwegian table-lands assume?  
This you must see to feel within your heart,  
And cannot know from others: Nature still  
In this defies all imitative art,  
Baffles all schools and soars beyond their  
skill:  
It is a joy she only shall impart,  
But, once received, it ne'er can cease to thrill.

## VII.

## A TERROR OF THE TWILIGHT.

FAR in Norwegian solitudes we strayed :  
    Behind us lay a long bright summer day,  
    But evening now was stooping o'er our way,  
When, at a sudden turn, alarmed we stayed.  
It was a terror by the twilight made  
    Of river, cliff, and cloud, and the weird play  
    Of sunset's one live liberated ray  
Piercing the horror of the pinewood shade.  
Stood, like a charred cross, or a huge sword-  
    hilt,  
    Against the sky, above the cliff's black line,  
That seemed a bastion by Harfager built,  
    A solitary thunder-blasted pine ;  
On the dark flood below, the sunset spilt  
    What now was blood and now was wassail-  
    wine.

## VIII.

## A WATERFALL WITHIN A WOOD.

THE sound, that seemed at sunrise—when the  
glow

Of Morning, mingling with the early breeze,  
Caught the still water through the lakeside  
trees—

The Voice of Liberty, now seems to grow  
The muffled moan of an imprisoned woe ;  
And Fancy, peering through the forest, sees  
An agonising Samson on his knees,  
With the pines looking on and whispering low.  
How does a noise, monotonous and rude,

Take tone, when blown into a poet mind,  
Concording with the mystery of its mood,  
And suiting with the symphony it designed !

—'Tis but a waterfall within a wood  
To Peter Bell and others of his kind.

## IX.

## MINERVA IN THE SÆTERS DAL.

WE said *Far Vel* to Frœsnæs at the dawn—

Leaving it as one leaves a treasure, soon

To long for it, and call it prize and boon

In words, sincere no doubt, but overdrawn.

Then on we raced as gamesome as the fawn

Though not so graceful, till mid-afternoon

Brought us to Hellé to the skydsstation \*

Under a cliff behind a natural lawn.

Here in a squalid room we look for ease,

Loath to sit down, but yet too tired to stand,

And call for black-cock, bacon, bread and cheese

—In short, whate'er their larder might com-  
mand :

Enters Minerva, kilted to the knees,

With a vast shield of fladbröd in her hand !

\* Pronounced *shûs-stashöön*—the posting-station.

## X.

## THE LITTLE MEAL-MILL.

PERCHED on its four grey cairns across the  
stream

That tumbles down the cliff, secure it stands;  
An old possession, for on plank and beam

Are Knuts and Olës carved by various hands.  
Its cubic measure, six by five by four ;

Yet in this compass, everything complete ;  
And there he bent—his back was towards the  
door—

While plashed the mill-wheel merrily at his  
feet,  
And ground his rye, and sang with honest glee.

—Be mine the knowledge that I now possess,  
And mine a heart, like his, of envy free,

And I could don to-day the sæter\* dress,  
And bring my wishes docile to my will  
To moil content in this Norwegian mill.

\* A sæter is a farm : the sæter dress, the dress of the peasants  
of the Sætersdal.



## XI.

## THE CLIMB FROM VALLË.

STEEP was the climb from Vallë: far below  
 The sæter we had left lay lost in mist,  
 And still the height rose higher than we wist  
 Beyond the ravings of the Otteraa.\*  
 And now a thin bleak air began to blow,  
 And now the bispevei† to turn and twist,  
 Here round a tjern‡ no summer ever kissed,  
 And there behind a hide of hoarded snow.  
 The stars dissolved anon; and airy trills  
 Of wavering music\* showed the day begun:  
 We toiled to meet the morn—o'er rocks, o'er  
     rills;  
 And, breathless, but at last our wish we won—  
 The top! and lo, a countless herd of hills  
     Tossing their shining muzzles in the sun!

\* Pronounced Otterø.

† Bridle-path.

‡ Mountain lake, tarn.

## XII.

“PAA HEJA :” LIFE ON THE HEIGHTS.

Is there a pleasure can with this compare?—

To leap at sunrise from your mountain-bed,  
Roused by a skylark revelling overhead,  
And drink great draughts of golden morning  
air ;

A plunge, and breakfast—simple rural fare ;

Then forth with vigorous brain, elastic tread,  
Hope singing at your heart o'er sorrow dead,  
And strength for fifty miles, and still to spare !

That joy was ours!—O memory ! oft restore us  
Those autumn runs, here in the smoky town,  
When through the woods our mad nomadic  
chorus

Rang freedom up and civilisation down !

Io ! my hearts ! the world was all before us,  
And we nor owned nor envied king nor  
crown !

## XIII.

## THE MOUNTAIN LAUREATE.

MORNING is flashing from a glorious sun  
 On the broad shoulders of the giant fells  
 That outreach arms across the narrow dells  
 And form a silent brotherhood of one  
 Listening their skylark laureate ! New begun  
 He up the heavens in ever-rising swells  
 Carries their thanksgiving in song that wells  
 From his small breast as if 'twould ne'er be  
 done.  
 What life his music gives them ! They are  
 free  
 In the wild freedom of his daring wing ;  
 And in the cataract of his song, the sea  
 Of poetry that fills all heaven, they sing ;  
 —He is their poet-prophet in his glee,  
 And in his work and worth their priest and  
 king !

## XIV.

## A THOUGHT OF HOME.

SHE walks where Callerfountain to Kinnoull  
Looks lovingly across the twists of Tay,  
And oft, along the zigzag of her way,  
Up Craigie burn, or through the plantains  
cool,  
Stoops, from the bank beside the shaded pool  
To pluck forget-me-nots, or from the brae  
A gowan, with whose petals she will play,  
Filling her breast of love's distractions full.  
Fair are the Scottish hills around her here,  
Nor fairer scenes a wandering eye beheld,  
But now in all the glory of the year  
To her their beauty is a dream of eld,  
And Norway's distant hills have grown more  
dear  
—For sake of one far up the Dovrefeld.

## XV.

MORNING—THE MOUNTAIN FAMILY  
AT THEIR DEVOTIONS.

I SEE across the lofty table-lands  
 A hundred regal mountains at the least  
 Inclining mutely towards the opening East,—  
 As many little tjerns and queenly vands  
 Kneeling at different levels: Phœbus stands  
 Beaming benevolence like a great High Priest  
 Blessing a nation for some holy feast  
 At his wide temple-door with lifted hands.—  
 Rejoice, ye hills ! ye happy mountains, fling  
 Your arms aloft in worship wildly free !  
 Ye vands, and rivers in the valleys, sing !  
 Shout ! till the heavens ring with your choral  
 glee ;  
 And God Himself with mild face wondering  
 Looks out at last, and smiles well-pleased to  
 see !

## XVI.

## A CANDIDATE FOR HONOURS.

THIS were a spectacle to cleanse the heart  
Of all the mean vexations of the town,  
The envious slander and the jealous frown,  
And all remembrances that make it smart.  
Phœbus Apollo ! fit another dart  
And shoot the last surviving meanness down  
Ere on my head thou place the golden crown  
And teach my lyre the mystery of thine art !  
Then, with a bosom purified of hate  
And rankling cares and cankers reared of  
wrong,  
Envy forgotten and the low debate  
That to unworthy rivalry belong,  
On thine own heights, Apollo, will I wait  
A shriven candidate of holy song !

## XVII.

## "THE LAST INFIRMITY."

THE god !—or else a fierce consuming flame !  
Spare me, Apollo of the burning brow !  
Spare me ! It was a rash novitiate's vow  
When to thy shrine with shameful haste I came  
And vowed, alas ! with an unworthy aim,  
To be a priest of thine : forgive me now  
And let me go, or take me where I bow  
And purge me of that lust of earthly fame !  
—Thus, like a weed that woos the summer sun  
To wither in the fierceness of his glance,  
The ignoble wish that I had told to none  
And scarcely to myself, by sweet mischance,  
Seeking to honour it, was clean undone,  
Pierced by Apollo's keen detecting lance.

## XVIII.

## HARVEST IN THE DALE.

A MILLION fields to-day are standing white  
Over the north of Europe: here is one,  
And three bright sickles circling in the sun  
Will have the little crop cut down ere night.  
The girl is singing, for her heart is light;  
But the two brothers think it best to shun  
The guise of gladness till the work be done  
And they have earned a reason and a right;  
Yet they are glad: God of the bounteous Year,  
What pleasure must be Thine to look from  
heaven  
Into a thousand happy dales, and hear  
From out the barren rocks, where man has  
striven,  
The voices of Thy children far and near  
Rejoicing in the gifts which Thou hast given!



## XIX.

## ARTHUR'S SEAT , AGAIN !

FJORD, wood, and waterfall, and cliff whose line  
Rose level with the heavens, and the long  
swell

Of fell up-reaching arm to brother fell,  
And the lone aspiration of the pine  
That stood erect on sunset heights divine  
Under the gaze of God in holy spell,  
While on the slope, or from the sunken dell,  
Aspens looked up and trembled—these were  
mine ;

And I had grown familiar with them till  
They seemed a patrimony all my own ;  
And yet when Arthur's green and rounded hill  
Met my returning gaze, and seaward blown  
A Scottish voice came floating—closer still  
Was Scotland at my heart than I had known.

## XX.

## A GREY MORNING AT GRANTON.

“How bright it is to-day! we see across  
 The Firth quite clearly to the shores of Fife!”  
 —Good heavens! And yet *'twere pity of my*  
*life*

(Thought I, while travelling northward to  
 Kinross)

If I should count as worse to me than loss  
 My fellow-creature's gain. Yet was the  
 strife

'Twixt scorn and pity for the grey-worn wife,  
 Thankful for nothing as it seemed, a toss.  
 For I had been where skies of brilliant hue  
 Soared o'er gigantic cliffs to heaven itself,  
 Where the delighted eye for miles looked thro'  
 Opaline widths of air, and aa\* and elv†  
 Linked vand to fjord with chains of living blue,  
 Or shot in foam from granite shelf to shelf!

\* Water; pronounced *o*.

† Stream; pronounced *elf*.

## XXI.

## ON THE PIER AT BURNTISLAND.

So ran my thoughts at Granton as the train  
Swept curving round in view of the grey sea,  
But when the lazy steamer crossed, and we  
Were free of its collective stinks again,  
I caught a glimpse, through cloud, coal-smoke,  
and rain

Upon the sloppy pier, that furnished me  
The missing gloss there well was need to be  
To clear the air for her, and light the main!—  
The world looks bright to kings—a favoured  
race

Who free of toil through earth's gay gardens  
roam ;  
Looks fair to lovers ; and a happy place  
To children ; but its brightest mornings come  
To humble mother waiting the embrace  
Of her bronzed sailor son returning home.

## XXII.

## A RARE DIP.

I'VE floated on Lochleven, dipped in Tay,  
And many another stream both great and  
small,  
Dared the white thunder of a waterfall,  
And been baptised in many a mill-wheel's  
spray ;  
I've drunk the brine in Kristiania bay  
And swum almost all up the Sætersdal,  
And every bath was ecstasy, but all  
Must yield to one rare dip I had to-day.  
Oh, pleasantly the Farg's clear waters flashed  
Into the rocky pool their liquid song ;  
With more than Alpheus' haste I stripped, and  
dashed  
Among the music, plunging oft and long ;  
And not alone my limbs—the music washed  
Hate from my heart, and from my memory  
wrong !

## XXIII.

## FROM THE WICKS OF BAIGLIE.

HERE there are braes, and glens, and brawling  
    brooks,

And cascades flinging loose their diamond  
    spray,

And waters winding down to firth and bay,  
And woods, and craigs, and knowes, and fairy  
    nooks ;

But on the hill-tops there are golden stooks,  
    And mill-wheels in the cascade's thunder play,  
    Boats breast the river, artists glenward stray,  
And over barren craigs rise pastoral crooks.—

Not many years ago the scene was claimed  
    By the rude elements—to whom it gave  
Thistle, and thorn, and stone, and stream un-  
    named,

Harvestless hill, and undivided wave ;  
Now the wild elephant is trapped and tamed,  
    Caparisoned and tended—and a slave !

## XXIV.

## THELEMARKEN : A PER-CONTRA.

HOWEVER, there's the freedom of the Fells,  
Such as the wilds of Thelemarken show,  
Where cataracts roar unbridged, and torrents  
flow  
Burdened but with the beauty of their bells ;  
Where the cliff soars, and the broad sky-roof  
swells,  
And morning comes with larger longer glow,  
And, pinnacled beyond the axe's blow,  
In peace the stately pine its centuries tells !  
Here you may live at large, with no one nigh :  
—Only, when twilight darkens earth and air,  
From the lone uplands you may chance to spy  
On the cliff-edge a wolf, perhaps a pair ;  
Or silhouetted on the evening sky  
The slouching horror of a hermit bear !

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